



BUST OF THE AUTHOR DONE IN BRONZE
BY THE ITALIAN SCULPTOR DANTE PARINI

TOWARDS MUSIC



ADELIO G. VIANI

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To
MY WIFE

P R E F A C E

THE articles in this book were written at different dates during the past twenty years. The first article, "Music in Ireland," was contributed to a volume entitled *The Voice of Ireland*, published in 1925, comprising articles on a variety of subjects relating to this country. Many of the other articles were written for lectures which I was asked to give from time to time, as, for example, those on Beethoven and Schubert were delivered at centenary commemorations, those on Mozart, Donizetti and Rossini-Wagner were written for broadcasting, with musical programmes, and those entitled "All who can should sing" and "Verdi-Grieg" were given before the Rotary Club, Dublin. The date on which it was written is appended to each article.

I hope that the book may prove of interest to music-lovers, particularly in Ireland, where I have spent so many happy years of my life.

I should like to thank my friend, T. S. C. Dagg, and my son-in-law, D. J. Nolan, for their invaluable assistance.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
PREFACE	7
FOREWORD	11
SINGING IN IRELAND	17
GIOVANNI PIERLUIGI DA PALESTRINA	29
W OLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART	39
L UDWIG VON BEETHOVEN	49
FRANZ SCHUBERT	67
MILAN	77
OPERA	87
R OSSINI-WAGNER	93
OPERA AFTER WAGNER	103
OPERA IN THE OPEN AIR	121
ALL WHO CAN SHOULD SING	127
GAETANO DONIZETTI	139
GIUSEPPE VERDI	151
EDWARD HAGERUP GRIEG	161
CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD	165
GIACOMO PUCCINI	175

ILLUSTRATIONS

ADELIO G. VIANI . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
THE AUTHOR WITH HIS DAUGHTER MARIA AND BENIAMINO GIGLI . . .	<i>Facing Page</i> 20
GIOVANNI PIERLUIGI DA PALESTRINA . . .	28
WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART . . .	48
LUDWIG VON BEETHOVEN . . .	49
FRANZ SCHUBERT . . .	68
MARGARET BURKE-SHERIDAN . . .	76
JOHN COUNT MacCORMACK . . .	84
GIOACHINO ROSSINI . . .	92
RICHARD WAGNER . . .	93
CLAUDE DEBUSSY . . .	102
RICHARD STRAUSS . . .	106
GAETANO DONIZETTI . . .	148
GIUSEPPE VERDI . . .	156
EDWARD GRIEG . . .	162
CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD . . .	168
GIACOMO PUCCINI . . .	174 ^r

FOREWORD

My first meeting with Maestro Viani was when I became one of his pupils, shortly after he came to Dublin to take up the position of Senior Professor of Singing at the Royal Irish Academy of Music. That was in 1918, and ever since I have enjoyed his unbroken friendship. The following facts about him will, I feel sure, be of interest.

First of all, he holds the Diploma of Composition, the highest musical degree in Italy, from the Royal *Conservatorio* of Milan. He also holds from the same *Conservatorio* the Diploma of Professor of Singing and the Diploma of Professor of Flute; and obtained Certificates for Declamation, Poetical and Dramatic Literature, and the Physiology of the Vocal Chords. He was a member of the Board of Examiners and taught singing in the *Conservatorio*, and was one of the Directors of the Madrigal Society. Outside the *Conservatorio* he held the position of Professor of Piano in the *Calchi-Taeggi*, the chief educational institution in Milan; he was Musical Director of the *Umanitaria* Society; and musical critic of *Il Tempo*, corresponding to *The Times* in England. In 1932

Maestro Viani was honoured by the King of Italy with the title of Cavalier of the Crown of Italy. In the same year he was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Irish Academy of Music.

In 1928, with my co-operation, Maestro Viani founded the Dublin Operatic Society, and during the time that he was Musical Director the Society produced many operas at the Gaiety Theatre, some of which, like Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore* and Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, had seldom, if ever, been heard in Dublin. The Society was fortunate in having Mr. Herbert Bailey as its Honorary Producer, and its performances reached a very high standard in every respect. I remember hearing the late John Count MacCormack, after a presentation of *Carmen* at which he and the Lord Mayor of Dublin were present, warmly congratulating the Maestro on the excellence of the performance, and saying that he had never heard a more perfect rendering of the difficult quintet in the second Act. Maestro Viani has composed many beautiful pieces for orchestra and piano, as well as several songs, and nothing can be more enjoyable than to listen to him play or sing some of his own compositions.

Although Maestro Viani has forged unbreakable links with Ireland, where he has been settled for over twenty-six years, and has a warm affection for our country and its people, still the picture he has given us of his beloved Italy, with its sunny, skies, its smiling landscapes, and its sublime music,

FOREWORD

shows that Italy is seldom absent from his thoughts. I know of no one better qualified than he is to write about music and musicians. His wide knowledge, his enthusiasm for his subject, and his nice sense of humour have enabled him to make his book a charming and valuable contribution to musical literature.

T. S. C. DAGG.

Dublin.

November, 1945.

TOWARDS MUSIC

Singing in Ireland

IN writing of singing in Ireland it is necessary to examine first whether there is in Ireland a musical tradition, and, if so, how far this tradition is important to the art of singing. From the available publications of national popular songs and instrumental music one can deduce that there is an unmistakable musical tradition in Ireland, although through forms that do not represent a musical atmosphere altogether of the first order. Of Irish popular songs, some, very beautiful, are inspired with a melancholy and pity that seem to reflect the history of a suffering people and the dreariness of a storm-beaten and rain-swept landscape; others, again, give utterance to impulsive joy. Taken as a whole, therefore, they reflect both exultation and despair, and resemble not merely the Irish people, with their vicissitudes of fortune, but the Irish climate, with its violent changes.

But the popular song alone is not sufficient to mark the musical progress of a race. The collective soul can produce a certain musical atmosphere, but the most elevated forms of art are inspired and

enriched only by the creative powers of individual genius. The popular song can be the consoling cry of a people oppressed, or the joyous paean of a people victorious, but it remains always a rudimentary form of art, and does not exhibit in itself the powerful imprint of creative genius. That race can claim to be progressively musical which endeavours to free itself from the common forms, and to create little by little the genius that is at once an exponent of its aspirations and an index of its evolution to purer forms. This is proved by the musical history of the German, Italian, French and other European races. The history of German music, especially, from past centuries up to the present day, is brilliant with luminous pearls, every one of which makes its particular period immortal. From the hymns of Luther with their solemn grandeur, to the music of Wagner, which, like a rushing torrent, has inundated the world with its eternal regenerative rhythm, down to the last modern discords of Richard Strauss, genius has left indelible impressions on German musical history. Such gigantic musical achievement cannot be ignored by any student in any country. A worthy musical tradition cannot be built up except on a study of the classical forms, and what we need, therefore, is a musical institution for this primary purpose, the study of popular national music being merely a secondary aim.

It is regrettable that political conditions in Ireland, while certainly fostering the development of popular songs, have, on the other hand, prevented the study of the more elevated forms. Nor have geographical conditions been more propitious. Lying far away on the outskirts of Europe, Ireland has been able to receive only a very distant echo from the centres where music sings her great songs, and consequently, everything musical reaches us late and with difficulty. For this reason, doubtless, there is a tendency amongst us to promote performances which appeal merely to popular sentiment. The audience becomes blinded to what is good and begins to believe that it enjoys what is actually bad. Aspirations that, properly directed, might lead to higher ideals are destroyed. And so we see long queues of people waiting, sometimes in the rain, to imbibe what is, after all, little better than musical poison. An even graver consequence, however, of the unfavourable conditions just referred to is the lack of a critical faculty in the audience. Music speaks a most difficult language, the forms and laws of which are peculiar to itself, and have no parallel outside its own domain. It cannot be understood without prolonged study, the opportunities for which, unfortunately, are rarely to be found in Ireland. Consequently, the judgment of the masses is too often the judgment of a newspaper, and consequently not a collective and authoritative judgment based on a number of

separate expert analyses. We must change these conditions before we can raise the standard of musical achievement.

What vocal material, one may now ask, has the teacher of singing to work on in Ireland? From my experience in Dublin I can say that I have found many good voices, and that notwithstanding the climate, and the tendency to smoke too much, the once generally accepted theory that nature produces good voices only in sunny lands can no longer be seriously maintained. Without counting the best-known Irish singers, there really exists in Ireland a large number of good voices that, well guided, should win credit far above the average. Why, then, are the results as a rule mediocre? I will try briefly to answer this question.

It may as well be said at once (and I hope without offence) that if there were more qualified teachers in Ireland the results would be very different. In this country, unlike Italy, no specific diplomas are required for one who wishes to teach singing. Yet common sense surely demands that the teacher of singing, like the medical practitioner, should be obliged to produce evidence of qualifications. Singing cannot be taught correctly except on scientific principles. Good results are, perhaps, occasionally obtained by other methods; if so, they are *per accidens*, not *per se*, and must be ascribed to the exceptional merit of the pupil, who succeeds, in spite of, rather than because of, the teacher.



THE AUTHOR PHOTOGRAPHED WITH HIS
DAUGHTER MARIA AND BENIAMINO GIGLI,
THE CELEBRATED ITALIAN TENOR

Within the limits of this article it would, of course, be impossible even to mention all the different systems of teaching. Some teachers advise singing with the larynx low and fixed; some wish to keep the larynx rising and falling in the throat like a lift; some advocate nasal production; some conceive the mouth as the only box of resonance; some suggest the arching and enlarging of the palate in order to obtain volume; some seek to produce notes like a whistle; some demand a ringing quality, and so on. Obviously, I cannot discuss these in detail. It is sufficient to say that systems based on the exaggeration of one method or of another can only be called empirical. What, then, are the qualifications necessary for a teacher of singing? They are many. They cannot be acquired in a short time; some of them, in fact, can never be acquired. The teacher must be deeply versed in technique. He must thoroughly understand the physiology of the vocal organs. He must have keen power of analysis. He must be something of a psychologist. He must be honest to the point of rudeness. He must possess a high general, as well as a high musical, culture. He must possess an exquisite taste, and if he wishes to inspire his pupils he must be able to sing. That he should be gifted with a perfect ear for tone as well as for pitch goes without saying.

One fault noticeable in Ireland, and clearly due to defective teaching, is *pianissimo* (*falsetto*) singing, or, as it is called here, "soft singing."

When well done, nothing can be more admirable or delightful. But it presupposes such a number of qualifications, such a knowledge of vocal mechanism, such a sure control of the breath, and of all the muscles engaged in the production of voice, that it is only the expert artist who can do it without injury to the voice, *and then only as the crown and reward of long years of study*. Yet, we frequently hear comparative beginners, who are unable to produce a really pure sound, singing *falsetto* to please the audience; and this so systematically and habitually that they are clearly unconscious of the grave harm they are doing to their voices. Indeed, few people in Ireland seem to have a right conception of the time necessary to master the art of singing. It is admitted that the piano should be studied for eight or ten years before the pupil can play with a certain amount of proficiency, but for singing—six months is considered sufficient! “One must sing as the birds,” they say; but they fail to remember that the birds sing because singing is their own language, while to us the voice was given by nature not primarily for singing but for speaking. The range of the voice in ordinary speaking is about five tones, and the range in singing is two octaves or more. In speaking the larynx is in one position; in singing it is in another. The human instrument, like any other, possesses its own mechanism, which must be

studied deeply if the singer is to give pleasure to his audience without doing injury to himself.

Much harm is also done by the way children are taught singing. They are made to sing too much in chorus before the larynx has reached maturity, and they injure the vocal chords in order to support the effort of singing together. In endeavouring to be heard above their neighbours they strain their throats, which become relaxed and fatigued, and in some cases a tremolo, and in others even laryngitis, is developed. In other instances, inexperienced teachers actually place sopranos with contraltos, and so force voices into registers that are unnatural to them. In this connection it may be no harm to mention that a ringing tone is not to be confused with a tremolo.

There are, of course, it is only fair to add, faults for which the teacher cannot be held accountable. In Ireland there are too many impatient pupils, who pass painfully, as it were by a *via crucis* from one teacher to another, experimenting with many methods, becoming proficient in none, and exposing themselves, in consequence, to the most serious perils. Such lack of constancy deserves nothing but disaster.

To summarise the foregoing observations, what is needed in Ireland for really great results are more scientific teaching, more constancy on the part of the pupils, more experience in the conduct of children's classes, less nicotine, a better realisation

of the fact that the study of singing is long and difficult, and that even when great natural gifts have been developed to the full, only perseverance and perhaps good fortune can bring brilliant success. The successful singer must also be not merely musical but the possessor of a wide general culture.

One of the most necessary factors in the education of a singer is unquestionably the opportunity of frequently hearing good musicians; in a word, as we say, a good musical atmosphere. Another necessity is an institution generously endowed by the State in order that it may be in a position to provide a large number of free scholarships. In each class there should be at least ten free pupils, to be chosen in open competition by a committee composed of not less than five persons of indisputable competence. The students should be enabled to pursue their studies for many years (at least four) during which they should receive three lessons a week in order to attain the maximum development of their qualities. Many good voices are lost because their possessors are in such poor circumstances that they cannot afford the time or money necessary to develop their natural talents. The institution should also have a suitable concert hall, in which frequent concerts of good music could be given in order to keep the pupils constantly before the public. The Royal Irish Academy of Music, during its existence of almost seventy years,

has done noble work for musical culture in Ireland, notwithstanding the great difficulties with which it has had to contend, and the insignificant measure of support it has received from the State.

• A third great necessity is the diffusion of music amongst the masses in such a way as to educate them and to make them familiar with the purer musical forms. In Milan, a society exists for this purpose called *Umanitaria*, of which I had the honour of being appointed musical director. Starting from the most simple musical forms and working up to the most complex, always on the purest lines, we educated the people and enabled them to realise emotions before unknown. With lectures upon the aesthetics of music, performances of string quartettes, concerts of singing and free concerts given by the orchestra of *La Scala*, under the direction of Arturo Toscanini, we developed in the masses a sense of beauty by means of the art of sounds. Why should we not find in Dublin musical apostles who, putting aside commercialism and fixing their attention only on ideals, would dedicate their energies to so noble a mission? A similar society could be founded here. The concerts given by it should be free, or accessible at a charge not above the reach of the many. Such a society would have a direct influence upon the formation of good singers, since only in a musical atmosphere of the purest and highest kind can singers with good qualities and rich intellects derive full advan-

tage from their gifts and reach the highest pinnacle in their profession. In this way, many whose ambition it is to be trained in foreign lands would study with better reason and greater confidence at home.

Moreover, the annual competitions that are held in Ireland, and especially the Feis Ceoil in Dublin, would become really great manifestations of art. There should, however, be three adjudicators, and, instead of being decorated, the singers selected should be provided with an opportunity of completing their studies.

It will be seen that I have endeavoured to demonstrate that the insufficiency of the results achieved by singers in Ireland is due more to functional than organic causes. In an illness for which there is no organic cause, it is sufficient to stimulate the functions in order to obtain a recovery, and similarly better conditions of atmosphere and of teaching in Ireland will bring to light musical powers which are at present abundant but latent.

We Italians have always followed with sympathetic interest the development of Ireland through turmoil and strife. With admiring eyes we have watched her efforts to free herself from the thralldom in which her spirit has been well-nigh strangled. We appreciate her most human and noble aspirations. We long to see her develop her great gifts to full fruition in an atmosphere of serene and

cloudless sunshine. We rejoice to think that she is rising at last from that bed of sickness and sorrow on which she has lain in torment for centuries, and that she is lifting at length, radiant and happy eyes to the rising sun of a glorious future. We wish for her infinite happiness, the only just compensation for her infinite suffering, and we believe that the people of Ireland, united in fraternal love, will make and sing new songs that will be heard with delight far beyond the limits of their island home.

Dublin, 1925.



GIOVANNI PIERLUIGI DA PALESTRINA A REPRODUCTION
OF AN ETCHING FROM A PORTRAIT PRESERVED IN THE
VATICAN LIBRARY

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

(1514—1594)¹.

MUSIC is the language of the soul. In other forms of expression, such as prose, poetry, painting and sculpture, there is a limitation imposed by virtue of the medium used. But music, unlimited in its essence, speaks directly to the emotions, and no restrictions, whether of words or form, interpose between the soul and the vision contemplated. So it is but natural that religion, the recognition and worship of God, in which the soul is raised to the contemplation of the greatest of visions, the vision of God, should early have found its most perfect outlet through music. It may almost be said that men learned to sing the praises of God before they could express them in formal prayer.

The origin of *canto religioso* or religious music should be sought in the first prayers uttered by the earliest dwellers upon the earth, which prayers took the form of songs of supplication and gratitude to the Creator. These are to be found through-

1. The exact date of Palestrina's birth is uncertain, but 1514 is considered the most likely

out all ages and amongst all races. The *canto* of the Christian Church, in the course of its evolution, united itself to the music of the ancient Greeks, and also to the Monodic music which followed the European Renaissance. The simple and timid *canti* of the Christians of Nero's days developed little by little into the hymns of triumph which resounded in the reign of the Emperor Constantine; hymns which set free the soul through the inspiration of the most human of religions.

Simple *canto* for one voice was followed by *discanto*, a new form of singing the glory of God, in which Gregorian Chant was joined with another *canto* of a different character. The fundamental part of *discanto* was called *canto dato*, or given chant, which was the liturgical melody. With it was combined a second part, as in our modern counterpoint.

In the course of this new evolution the profane and popular songs of the day penetrated the purity of sacred art, and the *canto fermo*, or simple melody of the early Christian hymns and chants, often became dissolved into two parts, one sung in Latin, the other in the language of the popular song. Although such developments, if regarded from the religious and aesthetic points of view, might have been considered sacrilegious, they assured the future of music, for the birth of *discanto* brought with it harmony between sounds and the art of composition.

The polyphonic form of music (a development of the *discanto*) in which more than two separate simultaneous melodies were harmonised, gave rise to the styles of imitation and canon, from which later was born the fugue. Amongst the musical compositions belonging to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which were adorned with counterpoint the song, *L'Homme Armé*, of unknown origin, was the most famous.

Such were the abuses and excesses of polyphony that a reaction was necessary, a reaction which, in 1563, provoked the famous Council of Trent to decide upon banishing from sacred music every element which was not worthy of the austerity and simplicity of the House of God. Upon Pope Pius IV. fell the task of implementing this decision, and he formed a Commission composed of Cardinals, amongst whom were St. Carlo Borromeo and Vitellozzo Vitellozzi, who, conferring with the members of the Papal Chapel, were able to suppress those masses which contained melodies not of a liturgical character.

This period boasted some composers of great note, like Constanzo Festa and Orlando Lasso, who, although they were renowned contrapuntists, showed marked signs of a return to simple and expressive forms, aiming with their music to interpret the sacred testament in a manner that would permit true Christian sentiment to bloom again with all its religious ardour.

Notwithstanding this favourable trend in the development of sacred music, the Council of Trent commissioned Palestrina to bring about a further reform, as he really was the only one who understood the spirit of Rome of that period, and accordingly he became the supreme musician of Catholicism.

Little is known of the first years of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, whose name in Latin was Joannes Petralaysius Praenestinus. Praenestus, situated in the *campagna* of Rome, was the old name of the town of his birth, which was later called Palestrina. It is known that his humble parents, who had early examples of his precocious genius, and who were conscious of the advantages offered to musicians of that period, sent him to Rome when very young, so that he might acquire culture in a good chapel. Here he studied with other students under the Dutch Professor Goudimel. In 1551, he was received into the Papal Chapel of St. Peter as *Magister Poerorum*, and later he became *Magister Capellae*. Pope Julius III invited him to sing in his choir, in 1555, and further commissions and honours were lavished on him by Marcellus II, who succeeded Julius; so much so that Palestrina, cheered by the prospects of a life full of promise, commenced the publication of a volume of compositions dedicated to the Pope. But Marcellus reigned only for twenty-three days, and died before he was able to put into effect his

intentions to aid Palestrina, who was then left in distress and confronted by many difficulties.

No sooner had Paul IV, the new Pope, taken up Office, than he requested information regarding the members of his Chapel. He wished to know if they were all keeping within the scope of the new regulations, a provision of which stipulated that the choristers had to be priests. At the time the choir included three married laymen, whom the Pope compelled to resign, and Palestrina, who was one of the three, found himself almost destitute, with a large family to maintain. But the Canons of the Lateran came to his aid, offering him a position as Maestro of their Chapel.

For six years Palestrina's life, although one of many tribulations, was, from the point of view of study, most intensive, and it was during this period that he composed his celebrated *Improperia*, a work abounding in sorrow and pure affection, which transports the listeners into an atmosphere of ineffable sweetness. Pope Pius IV much admired the great beauty of this composition and made arrangements for its performance in his Chapel in 1560, from which time it has been regularly performed during Holy Week. Full of sweetness and remorse, the simple harmonies adorning the mysterious words of the *Improperia* reach the heart and indicate the path which leads towards the real sanctuary of art.

When the question of religious reform became grave, the Cardinals instructed Palestrina to compose a Mass which would combine, in one perfect whole, richness in harmony, severity of style, and clarity of words. Palestrina presented not one but three Masses for six voices. The first of these was essentially religious in its conception, and austere of style. The second had more vitality, despite the fact that the style was again influenced by the Flemish School. The third, which was selected, had a perfect form and was full of inspiration. This choice marked the triumph of polyphony in the Roman Church, and the author, desiring to keep alive the memory of his deceased patron, named the Mass *Missa Papae Marcelli*.

In 1571 Palestrina returned to conduct the choir of the Chapel of St. Peter, and in 1584 he dedicated to Gregory XIII. a composition overflowing with holiness and blessed rejoicing. It was called *Cantico dei Cantici*—"Canticle of Canticles." It is not possible in this short essay to enumerate all Palestrina's many compositions, but it might be mentioned that he composed ninety-three Masses. He wrote hymns on liturgical melodies, with astonishing elaboration, and wrote compositions for twelve voices, and others for twenty-two voices. Such was the prodigious mind of the *Prince of Music*, as he was then called.

Palestrina's style may be divided into three principal periods of progression. In the first he

followed the Flemish School which, not very rich harmonically, used melodies in a parallel form, without fusing them into a harmonic whole. It was more than anything else a strict style, either in the form of canon or fugue, and its influence became evident when Palestrina composed in florid manner on the traditional melody, *L'Homme Armé*, which was used as *Cantus firmus*. Even in this style he outshone all his predecessors.

The second style is contrary to the first, and was composed of simultaneous progressions resembling modern choral works. The melodies are very singable, so to speak, and easy for intonation; but they do not rise to great heights, and the composer does not indicate any intention of producing resounding effects. *Impropria*, however, with its marvellous simplicity, is a lovely example of this style. It is a revelation of Palestrina's genius, and was considered by Mendelssohn to be his best work. In it he combines dignity and suffering with excellent taste, and in a manner most appropriate for religious services.

In the third style the two elements, melody and harmony, unite in a sublime and powerful whole, and it is in this that all the inspiration and purity of Palestrina are richly fused. A beautiful example is the famous *Missa Papae Marcelli*, which represents the zenith of Palestrina's creative power in this sphere, and which is written somewhat in the manner of Hypoionian mode for six voices. In

spite of its rather complicated form of fugue and canon, Palestrina succeeds in obtaining with it one of the most important results; that of success in concealing the art which produced so many beautiful works. The composition is not abused by useless discordant sounds, but fuses itself in the progressions of the triads, giving a sensation of great simplicity, even in the most complicated passages.

In the simple use of choral forms Palestrina may well be compared with Bach. Both of these great musicians were polyphonists, although remaining sincerely religious in their inspiration. Palestrina may be considered the representative of Catholicism, just as Bach represents Protestantism in music. The influence which Palestrina had on both the music and musicians who followed him was immense. The most famous critics in Italy, and indeed of almost every country in the world, sang his praises. His works were performed for the faithful in all the churches, and it became almost essential for the composers of sacred music to follow his style. The reason for this must be sought in the infinite beauty of his music, and in the greatness and profundity of expression, which unite themselves directly with the intimate essence of the atmosphere of worship and of religious functions. These qualities, even today, move the listeners with their ecstatic beauty.

Avoiding the showy or *eclatant* type of music, Palestrina derived inspiration directly from the

foundations of the mystery of religion, as well as from mystical manifestations, all of which he desired to penetrate and elevate with his music. He was not preoccupied with the sequence of chords in themselves, but secured his majestic effects from the harmonies created by the whole ensemble of combined *canti*; *canti* which, nevertheless, did not lose their individuality, but which were fused in an organic ensemble of great grandeur. It was natural, therefore, that this harmonic fusion of the religious and artistic conception, which is expressed in Palestrina's music, should adapt itself in worthy fashion to the performances of religious services in the Roman Church.

An exact conception of the respect and devotion which Palestrina had for his art is provided by his own words, written for his first book of Motets in the form of a dedication to the Cardinal d'Este, Duca di Ferrara :—

“Music has a great influence on the minds of men, and it is intended not only to make them happy, but also to guide and control them. This assertion was made by the ancients, and is repeated again by men of the present times. Therefore, those who abuse this great gift from God, and use it in an unworthy and frivolous manner, encourage men to do wrong, who by nature have a tendency towards evil. For my own part, I have, since my youth, had a devout desire not to compose anything which

T O W A R D S M U S I C

might lead anyone to evil. This desire is stronger even now, as I approach my old age. I feel I must devote every thought to that which is noble and worthy of a good christian.” •

Dublin, 1944.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

WOLFGANG Amadeus Mozart, the great Austrian composer, was born in the City of Salzburg in 1756, and died in Vienna in 1791. In the baptismal register, his name appears as Joannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus. He was educated by his father, Leopold, a talented musician in the service of the Archbishop of Salzburg, and founder of a successful school of music. Leopold Mozart had a high reputation both as a teacher and a player of the violin, and his method of playing this instrument enjoyed a great measure of success, and was generally adopted in Europe. While he was known to be strictly honest, he was also considered mean, and was accused of commercialising the talents of his gifted children. How far this was true it has never been possible to determine, but he was probably compelled by poverty to take advantage of his children's capabilities to help him to overcome his financial difficulties. There were, in all, seven children, five of whom died while very young, leaving Wolfgang, and a sister, Maria, five years older, who became a great pianist and the recipient of

many honours when playing with her famous brother.

It was not without a certain amount of anxiety that Leopold Mozart followed the intellectual progress of his precocious son, who, at the age of ten, produced a piano concerto of almost insurmountable difficulty.

Mozart began his concert tours at the early age of six, playing at Munich, and later in Vienna, where he was enthusiastically received by the Emperor. It was in Paris, however, that he was given the greatest acclamation, and there he published his first compositions, four sonatas for piano and violin. Later, he visited London and Holland. On his second visit to Vienna he had to face a dark period of financial difficulties and worries. Although hailed as an *enfant prodige*, he received more petting than pence, and the envy of his enemies had already attained a force sufficient to impede the production of his first opera, *La Finta Semplice*, which he wrote at the age of twelve years. Sigismund, Archbishop of Salzburg, however, commanded a representation of it in his palace, and gave Mozart an honorary appointment as *Maestro di Capella*. As this did not involve residence he was still free to continue his tours abroad.

Of all foreign countries, Mozart considered that the brightest future was held by Italy, where music was born; wherein everything was music, from the

colours of the sky to the perfume of the flowers; from the pale lights of dawn to the triumph of the sun; from the impregnating heat of the afternoon to the freshness of a moonlit night. In 1769 Leopold Mozart brought his celebrated son to this melodious land, the musical atmosphere of which was in such perfect harmony with the young genius that, under its influence, he wrote works of great technical and inspirational value. In Milan, he composed, after the Italian style, *Mitridate* and *Lucio Silla*, of a power and beauty that drew great praise from the leading Italian musicians, who proclaimed that the glory of their country would be overwhelmed by the genius of the little boy from Salzburg.

On his return home, in 1771, Mozart was accorded a cool reception by Hieronimus, who had become Archbishop of the diocese on the death of Sigismund. Hieronimus, an extremely arrogant and cruel man, had no time for intellectual pursuits. He offended Mozart in the most vulgar manner, and literally persecuted him to a point which compelled the great composer to resign his post as *Maestro di Capella*. This development, coupled with the hatred in which Mozart held Salzburg, and its people, whom he accused of intellectual narrowness and spiritual poverty, was probably the cause of the composition of one of the poorest works in his repertoire, *The Dream of Scipio*, which incurred particularly harsh criticisms. The critics of this

opera, while they acclaimed Mozart's wonderful qualities as a virtuoso pianist, foolishly asserted that he had no further possibility of success as a composer! Yet, how much delicate beauty, and how many colourful flowers of a thousand intoxicating perfumes adorn the musical mosaics subsequently evolved by the fertile and effulgent mind of Mozart. To compose was for him an impulse, not an effort; a creative urge stimulated by the sheer joy of giving life to the beautiful and immortal visions that took shape in his mighty intellect.

In *La Finta Giardiniera*, produced in Munich in the year 1775, and in *Idomeneo*, produced in 1781, the development of Mozart's individuality may be observed. While in Vienna, in the summer of 1781, he composed sonatas for piano, and contemplated writing an opera that would usher in a new era for lyrical drama in Germany. About this time Mozart was victorious over Clementi in a competition for improvisation on the piano, held in the presence of the Austrian Emperor, for which he received fifty ducats. He was also commissioned by the Emperor to compose music for the libretto entitled *Il Ratto nel Serraglio* by Stephenie, Inspector of the Opera House in Vienna. The work, which was performed with great success in July, 1782, fulfilled one of Mozart's dreams, and established the supremacy of opera in Germany. Of it, the Emperor Joseph said; "It is too aristocratic for our ears, and there are

too many notes!" To which Mozart replied, "Just the necessary number, your Majesty." In the opinion of Weber, it is in this opera that the maturity of Mozart's genius is first noticed.

Mozart followed this up with *Così Fan Tutte*, *Il Flauto Magico* and *Tito*. In 1786, for the Theatre in Vienna, he wrote *Le Nozze di Figaro*, based on the libretto by Beaumarchais, specially re-written by the Abbé da Ponte, who added new passages. The story of *Le Nozze di Figaro* is a sequel to *The Barber of Seville*, based also on the book by Beaumarchais, which was set to music by Rossini. It is, perhaps, the most perfect of Mozart's operas, its completely maintained musical equilibrium making it impossible to single out any passages for their particular beauty or purity. In the chorus and ensembles the voices, although mingling in perfect harmony, preserve the individuality of the different characters which they represent.

In the year 1787, Mozart, at the age of thirty-one, wrote his masterpiece, *Don Giovanni*, for the Theatre of Prague. From that point onwards, his health declined progressively, and he became weak and subject to fainting. His last composition, the *Requiem*, was not completely finished when he died in Vienna, in 1791. Mozart put his greatest effort into it, and as the work progressed, he became more and more convinced that he was composing it for his own death. Of it he wrote: "Now, I must

depart, at such a time when it would be possible to live in peace, and write what-so-ever my heart should dictate, without obeying fashions and conventions. I have always felt that I would write this Requiem for my death ! ”

Mozart belonged to that period of phenomenal development in philosophy, science and poetry in Germany which marked the second half of the eighteenth century. Only politics were in a lethargic condition, and even the mighty and inspired genius, Goethe, was unable to rise above the political inertness of his day. Schiller, alone, succeeded in infusing into his poems the hope of a new Germanic liberty. But the people remained unmoved, and it required the French invasion and the Napoleonic Wars to arouse them. This condition explains why the art of Mozart, like that of Goethe, was untouched by political sentiment, and reflected the characteristics of that period in Germany which preceded the revolution in France.

Although more worldly than Haydn, Mozart never forgot the simplicity of his childhood, and the times when his faith had been a source of great consolation to him. With the *Requiem*, he showed how deeply religion was implanted in his being.

Considering Mozart within his own period, it may be claimed that there was bound up in him all the musical knowledge of his time, and that, with his greatness, he dominated the European

musical world. He gave to his music the profound knowledge and equilibrium of Bach, the dramatic sense of Gluck, and the sweetness of the Italian *Bel Canto*. He was as poignant in his expressions of sorrow as he was facile in his portrayals of happiness and frivolity. And if his predecessors were individually great, Mozart was, as it were, a synthesis of all their greatness. As is often the case with genius, his was a contradictory nature, combining impressionable sensibilities with a philosophic spirit, and a heart full of sweetness with a very positive mind.

Besides the operas mentioned, Mozart's compositions include forty-seven symphonies, twenty-three concertos for piano, six quintets, twenty-six quartets, twenty-two sonatas and fantasias for piano, two oratorios, and the *Requiem*. In addition to 626 items catalogued by Köchel, beginning with minuets written at the age of four and ending with the *Requiem*, there are many tantalising fragments. It seems almost impossible that he could write all these within his brief allotted span of five and thirty years.

Mozart was burdened by a multiplicity of tragic events of a weight that would have submerged a lesser character. History relates his many misfortunes, his sorrows, his lonely death, abandoned by all, and his burial in a pauper's grave. Yet he triumphed over adversity, his inspired genius

perpetuating the name Mozart, and even the hurricane which arose to disperse his bones may be regarded as a symbol of his universality.

Positive beauty is that fascinating force which unites in one whole, like a kaleidoscope of colours, the aesthetic manifestations of the universe, with which it is in sympathy. Creations of such beauty are evolved to symbolise the gradations and intensity of the emotions which agitate the soul, as exemplified by the composer who entrusts to music the mission of awakening sentiments like those of religion and morality, through ideas conveyed by tones. Such physical progress is maintained by those faculties which tend to rise from sensible things to those of the supernatural, in order to obtain a reflection of perfection, and, in such manner, that joy of life which Mozart pours forth from the innermost depths of his soul, is mirrored in the harmonious light of his music. His spirit is illuminated supremely by the love which is felt and expressed in all the characters that are musically represented by him. It is this quality that still makes them acceptable and continues to compel sympathy, when, sometimes, the natural reaction to their misdeeds should be one of repulsion.

Love is the cry that seems ever to rise from the heart of Mozart, infusing his operas with an intensity that amounts almost to an anxiety, as though he had a presentiment of imminent death,

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

the inexorable destroyer of this poem of life which he portrayed so faithfully. Love sings harmoniously through all his melodies, penetrating every fibre like a balmy breeze, caressing and perfumed, or like a consoling ray ever emanating from that pauper's unknown grave, to immortalize the genius of Salzburg, by the comfort and warmth which it will continue to bring until the end of time.

Dublin, 1939.



WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART



FIGURE OF BEETHOVEN ON VIENNA
MONUMENT BY ZUMBUSCH

Ludwig von Beethoven

In a damp, depressing little house with a tiny garden, which, in the latter part of the eighteenth century was an insignificant blot on the University Town of Bonn, was born, on the 17th of December, 1770, the immortal Ludwig von Beethoven. His father, originally a tenor singer in the choir of the Electoral Chapel, subsequently became its musical director, and at the age of fourteen, young Ludwig became his deputy in the same Chapel.

Beethoven was warmly complimented on his musicianship by Mozart, when, at the age of seventeen, Ludwig first visited Vienna, to which City he returned, five years later, in 1792, to establish his permanent residence there. This event may be regarded as closing the first, and perhaps, the happiest period of his life.

In Vienna, he made the acquaintance of Prince Lichnosasky, from whom he received a grant of 600 florins a year. He studied a little with Haydn and Salieri, and his wonderful talents having brought him to the front in a short time, he became the leader of the musical movement in the Austrian

capital. Success, however, added to the peculiar coldness of his manner, raised up for him a host of enemies, and was the cause of many jealousies.

Beethoven's earliest compositions are some trios, the three sonatas dedicated to Haydn, some quartettes for strings, two piano concertos, the septet for instruments, and the two first symphonies. Even in this period he began to develop that deafness which was to cloud the greater part of his life with sorrow. His next composition was the *Heroic* Symphony, followed by *Fidelio*, which was performed on the 20th November, 1805. At the time, however, the public did not appreciate this wonderful work, and Beethoven was so disgusted that he vowed he would never again attempt to write an opera. After his passion had subsided, a period of calm ensued, in which he produced the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, and the First Mass. In 1809, he was nominated by the King of Westphalia as Master of the King's Chapel, but, instead of taking up that position, he accepted, from the wealthy citizens of Vienna, the offer of an annuity of 4,000 florins, on condition that he would remain in their city. The annuity, however, gradually diminished, and his growing deafness making it impossible for him to continue as Musical Director, he sought relief from his sorrow in hard and continuous work, so that, in this period, the most prolific of his life, he produced no less than one hundred compositions.

In 1812, Beethoven composed the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, and, after his meeting with Goethe in Bohemia, he began the music for the *Egmond*. His last works are the *Grand Mass*, some piano sonatas, and then, the crowning glory of all, the Ninth Symphony. Such success attended the performance of this great masterpiece, in 1824, that Beethoven was compensated for all his sufferings, and for the indifference with which, largely on account of the immense popularity which Rossini's music was then enjoying, his former works had been regarded. In 1826 he travelled to London for the purpose of seeking assistance from the Philharmonic Society. On his return the great master contracted pneumonia and dropsy, and on the 26th March, 1827, he died, aged 56 years.

His deafness and the sorrows of his life made of Beethoven a subjective genius, and his music describes almost invariably his internal emotions, the world of his own desolate self.

Haydn may be said to be the founder of instrumental music, although his works also include music for the voice. Mozart preferred to compose for the voice. Beethoven was supremely a composer for orchestra. His life as a composer may be divided into three principal periods, in the first of which his compositions are still similar in style to those of Haydn, although, even then, signs of great originality are clearly to be seen. This originality develops in the second period, to which belong the

works that made him famous among his contemporaries. In the third period there are the characteristics of an extreme subjectivity in his compositions, which were not fully appreciated until later years, as the people of that time could not follow him. Being convinced that liberty could never be realised within the confined compass of his material life, this superb genius created for himself an ideal spiritual world, without barriers and with a limitless horizon.

Leaving the more material aspects of Beethoven's life, in order to attempt the study of his mind, through the medium of his greatest works, the nine symphonies, it will be seen that, as the tragic cloud of his deafness settles over him, the purity and dazzling nature of his music becomes more marked. The nine symphonies embrace a period of twenty-five years of activity, almost the second half of his life, and for the greater part of this he suffered from deafness, the early symptoms of which terrible affliction developed in 1800, when Beethoven was thirty years of age. He was then engaged in the composition of the First Symphony, which was presented before the advent of music critics to the newspapers, and, therefore, the exact effect produced by this work is not known. A few lines of comment in *The General Gazette of Music* read :

"We noted in this work much art, some novelty, and much richness of ideas, although the work seems to us more a piece of harmony than a real

composition for orchestra." Beethoven was a misanthrope, and the critics of that period did not regard him with favour.

Twenty ducats, equivalent to about £2 of our money, was the sum which Beethoven received for the First Symphony, the form and spirit of the first movement of which reminds one of Mozart's symphony *Jehovah*. The *Andante Cantabile con Moto* is full of grace, and although indicative of inspiration which the composer derived from his predecessors, it also shows his own sovereign talents already appearing. In the *Minuetto* he introduces a novelty, and the lively trio has a rhythmic accompaniment, full of chords. The *Finale* begins with an *Adagio*, and finishes in a *Vivacissimo* of the *Rondo* type, recalling the style of Haydn, with the character of a hymn to youth and joy.

In the beautiful introduction (*Adagio Molto*) to the Second Symphony, it can be imagined that Beethoven drew inspiration from the contemplative suavity of Giulietta Guicciardi. The development of this symphony, which was performed in 1808, is full of life, and leaves the impression that Beethoven was still strong enough to fight against the affliction by which he was tortured. Already, in 1800, he had written to Dr. Wegeler, "My hearing for the past three years is getting weaker and weaker. In the theatre I am forced to incline myself towards the orchestra in order to hear the artists.

I cannot hear the top notes of the instruments or the voices when they are at a little distance. I often curse my existence, but Plutarch has taught me resignation. I mean to fight against my fate, although at times I feel that I am the most unhappy creature in the world." The words, "I mean to fight against my fate," afford an insight into the character of Beethoven, and of his music, and explain his continuous campaign against misfortune.

Mozartian in character is the first movement of the Symphony in D. The *Larghetto* is attractive, and rich in its development and its modulations. There are two melodic ideas on the Tonic and two on the Dominant, so that we get the sensation of a double thematic exposition in this movement in which the composer creates for himself an atmosphere of peace. Impressive with its richness of invention is the *Scherzo*, so full of humour and laden with dialogues between the orchestra parts. The last movement bears the characteristics of human happiness and hope.

About the time that Beethoven composed the Second Symphony, he again met Haydn, who complimented him on the success of his Ballet *Prometheus*. "I am still very far from the . . . *Creation*," replied Beethoven with emotion, referring to Haydn's great oratorio. Haydn's attitude towards the humility of his former pupil

is illustrated by his comment: "Oh! I know that, and you will never arrive there."

The French Ambassador in Vienna, Bernadotte, suggested to Beethoven that he should dedicate a symphony to Napoleon, and, as this thought was already in his mind, the *Heroic* Symphony was composed about the year 1803. As is widely known, the cover was inscribed "Bonaparte: Luigi von Beethoven," but the moment that Napoleon became Emperor, Beethoven changed the title, giving it the name by which it has since been known, The *Heroic* Symphony. When Napoleon became First Consul, Beethoven saw in him the symbol of universal peace, and conceived the idea of dedicating to him this symphony that would sing his praises. When, however, the Little Corporal became Emperor, the great composer, filled with disdain, tore to pieces his dedication, and flung the score violently upon the floor. When Napoleon died in 1821, Beethoven exclaimed: "I wrote the funeral march for this man, seventeen years ago."

In the *Heroic* Symphony, Beethoven exhibits new impulses, and raises himself to greater heights. In reference to it, Wagner wrote: "In the first part, the giant is vanquished, and in the second part, the funeral march, he expresses his sorrow. In the third movement, he arises again to resume the fight, and in the fourth he triumphs, and sings the hymn of hope and love." Of tragic beauty is the funeral march, in which there is a sobbing sound, conceived

with unsurpassable art. The *Scherzo* (*Allegro Vivace*) is a tumultuous scene that affects the spirit as might a fantastic vision, whilst the *Finale* (*Allegro Molto*) is based on the Variations, amongst which the third, with the theme in the basses, possesses one of the most beautiful melodies known. After the Variations, follows a fugue in C. minor, constructed with masterly art from elements of the second Variation. Before it ends the second theme assumes a character of *Andante*, very sweet, until the *Presto Dithyrambic* closes the work. The *Heroic* Symphony contains most of the greatness of Beethoven. With it one feels that the eighteenth century has already come to an end, because, while in this work there are some elements already conceived by Haydn and Mozart, there are also found other conceptions absolutely and profoundly new. The title *Heroic* almost suggests a breaking-away from the traditions of the eighteenth century.

This symphony portrays the strength and joy of the heroic soul, and its fight for the realisation of a dream of love and beauty. In it Beethoven brought to its highest perfection the union of idea with form. On the one side there are new inspirations, rich in their conception and abounding in beauty; on the other side is the classical construction, guiding and moulding the many and varied parts into a harmonious whole. The *Heroic* Symphony, with its revolutionary form, created astonishment

and enthusiasm in the musical world of the time. Even its length—fifty minutes—was without precedent, and, when exception was taken to this, Beethoven declared, "The next symphony will last an hour."

The Fourth Symphony cannot be placed on a level with the *Heroic*, the Fifth, the *Pastoral*, or the Ninth, but in it Beethoven also displays the characteristics of exuberance and freshness. In the first movement, he shows again how much he loved to resolve the problem of developing many themes together. The *Adagio* of the Fourth Symphony is, perhaps, one of the most moving pages ever written by Beethoven, and it certainly reflects his state of spiritual depression, which was at this time accentuated by the financial embarrassment which followed upon the failure of *Fidelio*. The *Allegro Vivace*, in the form of a *Capriccio*, reverts to the tradition of the Minuet. In the last movement, traces of the influence of Mozart are again seen.

Beethoven opens up new horizons and presents fresh proof of his sparkling genius in the Fifth Symphony, in which, although allowing himself a greater liberty of expression, he never loses that perfect architectural sense of form, which is the hallmark of his work. The Fifth Symphony, which joins the *Heroic*, the *Pastoral* and the Ninth, amongst other works in the communion of the greatest conceptions of musical art, is a cry of

anguish, relieved only by the last movement, much after the manner of a ray of sunshine that illumines the mountain top at the end of a storm.

The period in which this work was composed was one of the most sorrowful in Beethoven's life, tormented as he was by his growing deafness, by delusions of love, and by family troubles. There are innumerable instrumental beauties in the symphony, which is the ideal illustration of fusion of idea with form, and an example of perfect harmony not only between the different parts of every single movement but between all the movements themselves. It has an immediate appeal by virtue of the depth and the purity of its inspiration, and every performance brings new pearls to the surface. The Fifth Symphony is the Ego of Beethoven. In it he reveals himself, and there is seen the fight of the man against his fate; in it also are shown all his sorrow, all his hopes, all his anger, and all his love.

At this point, a great change comes over Beethoven, his struggle against destiny giving place to that sense of resignation which is so apparent in the three succeeding symphonies. The *Pastoral* appeared in 1808, the Seventh Symphony in 1813, and the Eighth in 1814, years not by any means the worst in Beethoven's life.

On the first page of the Sixth Symphony there is written, "More the expression of the impression received, than its picture;" from which it is

gathered that the master's intentions here are abstract rather than descriptive. Written in it also is the sentence: "Awakening of serene sensations of the beauty of the country." One is led to believe that in this symphony Beethoven wished to reveal his internal emotions and not to record any impressions of outside. Here is seen the passage from his anguish to a state of comparative serenity. Peace is at last, to some extent, taking the place of the sombre sorrow in his soul.

In the *Pastoral* Beethoven approaches the symphonic poem without leaving for a moment the symphonic substance so strongly represented in that work. He does not describe but expresses sentiments, recalling poetically things seen and felt whilst, at the same time, leaving one free to discover new sensations. A phrase written by Beethoven on a violin part conveys the advice to "try to reproduce more the expression of the sentiment than the musical picture." It was his wish that the performer should interpret a state of mind and not merely reproduce a combination of notes. Many years after he had written the *Pastoral*, Beethoven and his friend Schindler, passing through Heiligenstadt, visited a little valley where, communing with nature, he once used to spend day after day composing that beautiful symphonic poem, frequently returning home without hat or coat. In the course of their reminiscences, Beethoven asked Schindler whether he could hear the birds singing, and, on

receiving an answer in the affirmative, he embraced his friend and burst into tears.

The Seventh Symphony in A is that which most enchants the listener, by reason of its poetical abstraction, its ideality, its power and its unity. Here again, the Muse does not forsake Beethoven, who professes himself in streams of purest melody, in instrumental developments, and in the never-ending beauties of the different movements. The power of the rhythmic insistence is so great that one can almost detect the pulsations of the composer's heart. Wagner thus describes it: "This symphony is the apotheosis of the dance in its supreme essence; it is a prodigy thrice blessed that reproduces in idealistic sounds the movements of the body."

In the Eighth Symphony, which was performed in 1814, the *Adagio* is replaced by an *Allegretto Scherzando*, which is almost a dance movement. It would appear that this had its origin in a canon inspired by the rhythm of the metronome, which had but lately been invented by Maelzel. In this symphony, Beethoven renounces not only the *Adagio*, but also the *Scherzo* in order to introduce again the Minuet. Although the influence of Haydn is a little apparent at the beginning of the work, it has, nevertheless, all the maturity of Beethoven.

Between the Eighth Symphony and the Ninth, a period of ten years elapsed in which Beethoven, now

completely deaf, proceeded with his work with the utmost activity, uninfluenced by the outside world and illumined only by his genius. The struggle against the bitterness of fate is the inspiration of the Ninth Symphony, which contains a synopsis of Beethoven's life—his art, his sorrow, and his genius. In reproducing his own sorrow, he represents the sorrow of mankind. Antithetical in form is this great poem, on one side of which are the dark colours of pain and anguish, and on the other light and joy, ending in a hymn to the supreme God, in whose love we all find a refuge.

Although Beethoven's genius was greatly respected at this time, his art was not fully valued, and his peculiar character alienated most of his friends. He was not understood even by Goethe, who wrote: "Beethoven is an impossible man. He regards the world as a detestable invention, but this is no reason for tormenting himself and those who are about him." In contradiction of this opinion, it is sufficient to read Beethoven's love letters, which show him to have possessed a soul full of simplicity and sweetness; sweetness to which, alas, to his unending sorrow, the heart of woman never responded.

During the creative period of the Ninth Symphony, Beethoven was full of projects, amongst them one to set to music Goethe's *Faust*. After long consideration, he discarded this idea, deciding instead to isolate himself for some time in the house

of a plumber with whom he had formerly resided. On the occasion of his first stay with the plumber he had been accepted with coldness and indifference, which this time gave way to a warm welcome. It transpired that the reason for the change of attitude lay in the fact that, some time after Beethoven had left the house, an Englishman had bought its window-shutters for a large sum of money. Later, it became known that the great master, who was in the habit of recording his musical ideas on everything about him, had written some themes on the shutters, and that the Englishman had bought them in order to obtain Beethoven's precious autograph.

Thus it happened that in the lonely house of the plumber, Beethoven composed the Ninth Symphony, which great work he divided into four parts. The first part is tragic; the second recalls the humour of Heine; the third is calm and contemplative, while the fourth is a great new poem, inspired by Schiller's *Ode to Joy*. The first movement, which suggests a discouragement of materialism, comprises 547 bars, and develops along colossal lines. With what harmonious form does he contrast it and the last movement, which invites all men to unite in brotherly affection. In the *Idea Tragic*, the violins are like flashes of fire, and the absence of the third in the chord gives to the attack a mysterious effect, absolutely new at that time. The idea is developed in different ways, so that the themes are multiplied. With the exception of a little

calm suggested by the second theme, there is, throughout this movement, the crashing of a tempest in all its fury, above which the soul of the composer seems to soar. In the *Scherzo*, the minor key is in great contrast to the rhythmical vivacity of the movement. Instead of the *Trio*, there is introduced here a *Presto* in cut time, the form of which is of an amplitude in keeping with everything Beethovenian.

The *Adagio Molto e Cantabile* introduces an atmosphere of purity and peace, wherein Beethoven's soul seems to have become possessed of a spiritual calm. The *Andante Moderato*, as a second theme of this movement of syncopated rhythms, brings one back to earth. These two later became themes for Variations. When Beethoven arrived at the *Finale*, he remained for some time in doubt. Since the year 1793, he had contemplated setting the Ode by Schiller to music, and, in 1823 he was still wondering whether he would write the last movement of the Ninth Symphony for orchestra alone, or whether he would introduce voices, which latter course he eventually decided upon. Schiller's Ode was dedicated to Liberty, but, because of the objections of the censors of the time to the word *liberty*, it was necessary to substitute *Joy* in its stead. So, in the *Finale*, Beethoven, the democrat and republican, sings of the liberty which belongs to the generous and the strong.

The form of this last movement is the Variation conceived broadly and freely, and in it Beethoven re-affirms the value of idea, the importance of design, and the irresistible strength of sentiment. One is prepared for the passage from the music pure to the music united with words by the form of recitative given to the cellos and basses. With consummate genius, Beethoven so contrives that the introduction of voices in the Ninth Symphony does not disturb the aesthetic unity of the work. He preserves for the orchestra the symphonic character, while at the same time using in symphonic form the voices, which here are an addition to the instruments, providing new tones brightened by the enlivening power of words. The theme of the *Hymn to Joy* has all the characteristics of a popular melody, as shown by the quotation :

“Brothers, o’er yon starry sphere,
 Sure there dwells a loving Father,
 Oh ! ye millions, I embrace ye,
 Here’s a joyful kiss for all,
 Praise to Joy, the God descendeth.”

At these words, the musical idea is on the same level with the greatness of the conception. This hymn to the union of mankind with the supreme God, to the exultation of love and religion, shows the aesthetic identified with the moral, and Art making itself the minister of civilisation and happiness.

The enthusiastic reception which the public gave to the Ninth Symphony was indescribable. Beethoven had his back turned to the audience and could not hear the applause. In a moment, Caroline Unger, one of the soloists, caught him by the shoulders and turned him towards the public. On seeing the enthusiasm, Beethoven became pale, and was overcome by emotion, and the public, beholding his face, became quite frantic in its applause.

At a performance of the Ninth Symphony, ten years later, there was present a young painter, who, having returned to his home, full of emotion, and inspired by the divine beauty of the work, dedicated his life to music. That young man was Wagner.

The curtain has descended, but our souls are still open to receive the light that shines from the genius of Beethoven. His spirit lives and moves amongst us and, although he may not know it, we feel that he is gazing upon us with eyes full of sorrow, while he delivers to us his spiritual message :

“Oh ! ye who consider me full of bitterness and hate,” he says, “who accuse me of being a misanthrope, how unjustly do you judge me. I was born with a warm heart, and with a sensitive temperament made for friendship, and I had to isolate myself against my will. I tried to battle against the difficulties of my situation, but I found arrayed against me insuperable obstacles. How can I, in fact, listen to people speaking to me without saying to

them, 'speak louder! scream, please, I am deaf.' Can I confess the absence of a sense that in me should be more perfect than in others, and which was at one time the most perfect and the most delicate? No, no, I cannot do so. Pardon me, O men, if I must fly from you. My despair is so bitter that many times I tried to end my life. I have been saved only by my art, and the duty I felt that I should give to others at least the joy that I could not have myself. Patience, only patience, I must have, and I will have. My God! look down from Heaven into my heart. You alone can know, you alone can say, how it beats only for the love of man, and for his happiness. Give to me the strength to live."

And Beethoven still lives, his divine harmonies, echoing in our hearts and ringing down the paths of time, will be for him an everlasting memorial.

Dublin, 1926.

Franz Schubert

A brief outline of the general position of music in Germany before the advent of Schubert is a helpful prelude to a study of that gifted composer. Although a new intellectual era had been created in Germany by men whose achievements in literature, art and science had made illustrious the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, the works of these great men were touched by ripples from the wave of foreign culture which was then supreme in the land. Whilst a Germanic spirit predominates in the works of Mozart, Gluck and Goethe, it is by no means absolute, and their art is not strongly national like that of Bach or Shakespeare. Mozart's fame rested, not on any essential national characteristics, but on his own simplicity, grace and melody.

The study of art and science was then pursued only by the few, and, on the whole, the great mass of the people was unable to appreciate culture of a high standard. That is why Goethe and Schiller, when writing their masterpieces, were neglected for Koetzebue and Effland. Beethoven himself was not

understood because his sublime compositions were too great and too new for a public which extended its preference to the popular composers of the day. By neglecting every opportunity of educating the masses, the ruling princes made greater the isolation of men of genius in music and literature, and widened the chasm which separated the uneducated populace from the cultured few. After the beautiful operas of Mozart, in which inspiration and form blended so perfectly, there was a noticeable decadence of opera in Germany. There was amongst the composers who followed a tendency towards a national idiom, the Napoleonic wars awakening a patriotic spirit; but were it not for Beethoven, who became a symbol of that spirit, the position of German music would have been very unsatisfactory at that time. In contrast to Gluck and Mozart, Beethoven initiated a music absolutely German, which nobly and profoundly represented the spirit of the nation; his *Fidelio*, standing alone in its perfection, was the fruit of a genius born at a time when few could either understand or appreciate his music.

Science and art in Germany had then more than one centre of culture, but no recognised capital to radiate opinions through the country which would be accepted by all Germany. In France, Paris was such a centre, and everything approved by the Parisian was accepted by all France. The situation in Germany, while seemingly an advantage,



Franz Schubert

FRANZ SCHUBERT

was in reality a source of disintegration. Consequently, whilst it was possible to formulate in Paris a national idiom acceptable to France, in Germany art was without that centre which would enable it to secure a certain unity of ideals.

The influence of Beethoven, which remained supreme in the musical movement of the period, soon began to bear fruit. There was no successful opera written by the composers who immediately followed him, because their particular talents did not find an outlet in this form, but there began a steady development in vocal and instrumental music, especially that for the piano. Forms were sought that were hitherto unknown, and individualism, to a maximum extent, became the fundamental expression in music. Beethoven had already asserted his independence of external influences, and now other composers saturated themselves in their own individualism, and their music became entirely personal. To this development the Lieder owes most of its perfection and success. It was at this point that a new star appeared in the firmament, and soon the world of music was enlightened by Franz Schubert.

Schubert was born in a small town near Vienna, in 1797. His father was a schoolmaster, and it was from him and from one of his own brothers that the little Schubert learned the rudiments of music, the violin and the piano. At eleven years of age he was nominated to the Imperial Choir because he

possessed a beautiful soprano voice, and here he learned the works of the great composers, admiring above all Beethoven, of whom he said: "Beethoven is the musical world nearest to God." During this period he first felt the desire to compose, and studied a little composition with Salieri, whom he left after a short time because of his Italian methods. When the change came in his voice he tried to assist his father in the school, but soon wearying of this work he devoted himself completely to music, which had for him a profound affinity. Whilst still a youth he composed some of his most brilliant masterpieces. During his short span of life he wrote no fewer than twelve operas and melodramas, over six hundred songs, eight symphonies, religious music, piano music, and male choruses. Most of these works were published posthumously.

In his lifetime Schubert never secured a position worthy of his merits, and he was even denied the pleasure of hearing many of his compositions performed in public. It was not until 1820 that the great singer, Vogl of Vienna, made his songs famous, especially the beautiful and popular *Erl King*, which was written in 1816 but was not published until 1821, at the expense of some friends. Schumann, the critic of *The New Musical Review*, acclaimed the genius of Schubert, and Liszt revealed the beauty of many of his songs by arranging them as piano solos.

Schubert, before he died on November 19th, 1828, had not reached his thirty-second year, but in his short life he gave to the world a profusion of beautiful and wonderful works. He lived absolutely in a world of dreams, inside which all things bowed to the inspiration of that inexhaustible imagination which coloured his music. Schumann said: "If fecundity is the characteristic of genius, certainly Schubert was one of the greatest who ever lived. I think that if he survived longer he would have set to music all the poetry of Germany."

There are two categories into which artists may be divided. First there are those who create but seldom, and then only in moments of sudden inspiration, which are followed by long periods of inactivity. The second category comprises those in whom the desire for creative work is continuous, and to this Schubert definitely belonged. All his works are like one great ensemble, animated by the same inspiration. As every composition of his is the continuation of the preceding one, it is consequently difficult to divide his life into periods, as is customary when studying the works of other great artists. His greatest faults are a certain musical redundancy, lack of concentration in his work, and prolixity. Schumann speaks of the sublime prolixity of the Symphony in C. Major. Schubert's best qualities are his wealth of imagination, his fascinating melody and his exquisite charm. Although having some analogy to Beethoven, he has not the

same grandeur or the same strength. It was as a composer of Lieder that he aroused the greatest interest, and he became the supreme exponent of this new form. He could extract from poetry its very quintessence of emotion, and by expressing it in music would endow it with still greater powers and with an infinite variety of colour. Every song of Schubert is, in itself, a complete episode, and through him, for the first time, the song acquired great importance and independence.

This new form of composition practised by Schubert made the selection of poetry for music a much more discriminating task, because in his work there is the perfect fusion of poetry and music, each being the complement of the other.

A simple, happy man of the people was the stoutly built Schubert, with the dark hair and great beautiful eyes that looked at life through his big glasses. Always poor, he was generous to his friends, never jealous of other musicians but ever ready to admire them, like a man who did not realise his own powers. Like his music, his character was good and pure. He was anxious to imitate Beethoven, at least in the careful and conscientious way in which the Bonn master used to correct and re-correct his works. With this in mind, Schubert studied the manuscript of Beethoven's *Fidelio*, so full of corrections, but in the end he decided that first thoughts were best after all, a conclusion which justified his own facile

system which, in moments of luminous inspiration, rendered possible the composition of six or seven marvellous Lieder in a day. His extraordinary facility produced new works so rapidly that he frequently forgot some of his own compositions, so that once, when a song composed by him but a few weeks previously was presented in his presence by a friend who had transposed it into another key, Schubert, not recognising it, remarked, "This is not bad," and asked whose work it was. When considering from the musical aspect the Dichterlieder of Schumann on the poetry of Heine, it may be asked whether it really reaches the same heights as the corresponding song cycles by Schubert, the beautiful *Miller Girl*, *The Winter Journey* (for every song in which cycle he was paid one shilling) and the third, posthumously entitled *The Swan Song*. Again, when one compares the song cycles of the three great composers, Beethoven, Schumann and Schubert, was it not Schubert who touched the pinnacle of perfection? His songs have accompaniments that are at all times lovely, and full of beautiful harmonies in which a modern colour may sometimes be detected. They are often imaginative, portraying the limpid freshness of a stream, the murmurous quivering of leaves, or the tremendous solemnity of the sea. It is sad to think that vocal recitals, now so full of Schubert songs, became fashionable only after his death. If he had lived a few years longer,

he would, perhaps, have enjoyed some more material comfort, and that fame of which he had only a dim perception during his lifetime. What love of the simple and noble was cherished by this composer about whose mystic and contemplative nature dwelt the perfume of innocence, yet who was described by some biographers as dissipated and disorderly. How humble he appears when one considers that, at the age of seventeen, having composed *Marguerita at the Spinning Wheel*, followed a year later by *The Erl King*, he should decide when he was thirty-one (a year before his death) to take lessons in composition, so that he might perfect and discipline his style.

Some years ago America subscribed 10,000 dollars to commemorate worthily the great composer who was so poor all during his life. America's first intention was to devote this money towards the addition of another two movements to complete the *Unfinished Symphony*. Thus, 10,000 dollars would have been spent to mutilate a symphony which Schubert gave as a present to the Musical Society of Gratz, in return for some honour received. This *Unfinished Symphony*, forgotten for thirty-seven years, is a work abounding in high inspiration and with a variety of expression that changes from dark melancholy to the greatest joy, possessing in the theme on the cellos a gem of such purity that it seems like the reflection of heavenly things.

Fortunately, the American project failed. I

FRANZ SCHUBERT

believe that in fact Schubert considered the symphony quite finished in its two movements, and I do not think he ever meant to add to it, because later on, he himself completed his quintet for cellos, besides composing the Symphony in C, and other works.

Dublin, 24 November, 1928.

To Maestro Viani Cordialmente
Margaret Burke-Sheridan



MARGARET BURKE-SHERIDAN FROM A
PAINTING BY GAETANO DE GENNARO

Milan

To speak of Milan is, for me, to open a vista of memories of that period of youth in which visions of artistic beauty warm the heart, and to recall an age of unlimited *joie de vivre*, as yet untouched by the jealousies and materialistic preoccupations of later years; an age in which youth is permitted a winged liberty of thought, and whose bright horizons are still unobscured by sombre clouds. Nowhere else the world over can those enchanting years be lived so intensively as in the artistic atmosphere of the northern Italian capital, wherein music sings all its songs and offers talent every facility to satisfy its thirst at the fountain-head of this sublime art.

The development of Milan in the last few centuries, during which its population grew from a hundred thousand to almost two millions, is phenomenal, spiritually as well as demographically, and is associated with the evolution of modern Italy which, recovering from Spanish domination, acquired a vastly wider character and outlook. After the fall of the Venetian Republic, the economic centre of the European Continent moved

away from the Mediterranean towards the Atlantic, and the geographically well-placed Milan was afforded an opportunity of opening its doors to trade currents flowing from the North. Over the Alps, crossed in other days by barbaric invaders, came merchants, musicians and poets from Germany, France and England. The Mecca of all was Milan, which became a centre of economic and artistic intercourse between Italy and her neighbours. To-day, Milan is probably the most cosmopolitan of all Italian cities. Situated in the centre of Lombardy, one could almost say that it beckons to visitors from beyond the Alps, inviting them within the protective folds of its Golden Madonna which surmounts the Duomo, whose mystic marble arches reveal a harmony of incomparable beauty and majesty and whose pinnacles, like the pipes of a fantastic organ, reach towards the sky, seeming to fill it with a music full of faith.

Milan is the musical centre of northern Italy, just as Naples once was, and Rome is to-day, the southern centre. Milan is sought by the student musician, because of the high prestige which it has enjoyed for centuries. There is scarcely a musical triumph or success which could definitely be so acclaimed without the acceptance and applause of the Milanese, a highly musical and critical people whose opinions and judgments have rarely been at fault.

M I L A N

Two institutions which have helped especially to make Milan a celebrated centre of musical culture are the *Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi*, and *La Scala* Theatre. In every important Italian city there is a *conservatorio* sponsored and subsidised by the state, which spends millions to maintain musical culture at a high level. The *Conservatorio* of Milan is generally admitted to be the greatest and most important of all musical institutions. In it students are afforded opportunities of developing any and every branch of musical education, from knowledge of the simplest instrument to the most complex forms of composition. The professors of the different subjects are carefully selected from the most highly qualified musicians in Italy. The *Conservatorio* of Milan offers hundreds of scholarships annually, and anyone who has received its Diploma of Composition may well be said to have reached the highest degree of musical culture.

The other institution which has helped to make Milan the focal point of attraction for the musical world is *La Scala* Theatre. Within the bounds of the city are also first-class societies for symphonic performances, and half-a-dozen theatres in which opera is presented during the Season, from September to May. At the head of the theatres stands, of course, *La Scala*, not only by virtue of the perfection of its performances, but also because of the excellence of its organisation. In it the functions of the artists, the orchestra, the

directors of orchestra, the lights and scenery, and the whole artistic conception of the production are blended together in perfect harmony. Yet it all seems simple and natural, as though representing a logical realisation of the aspirations of a people who love beautiful things to offer the most precious jewels of good taste and intellectual attainment. It can almost be said that within these walls universal musical genius has bequeathed to posterity an echo of supreme artistic achievements.

During the season at *La Scala*, which lasts almost six months, approximately fifty operas are produced. These usually include at least six new works, in order to give young musicians an opportunity of presenting their compositions to the public. The acoustics of the theatre are so perfect that even the softest sound can be heard in its most remote parts. The stage is fitted with a kind of enormous hood, made of canvas, called the *Vault of Fortouny*, which is capable of automatic extension or contraction by means of an electrical apparatus. On this hood the most fantastic lighting effects are obtained by the use of an infinite variety of colours. A *première* in *La Scala* is an event of much emotion and excitement, when the vast empire-style auditorium, capable of accommodating more than 4,000 spectators, is thronged with an expectant and critical audience, whose verdict the world outside awaits with interest and anxiety. At *La Scala* there are always numerous celebrated soloists of every

nationality, an orchestra composed of one hundred and fifty instrumentalists, and a chorus of almost five hundred voices. In addition, there are a School of Choreography, and a Ballet, and a multitude of *Tramagnini*, who take walk-on parts, in order to increase and lend movement to the assemblage on the stage. Close on a thousand people participate in some of the productions. *La Scala* was fortunate in having for a long period as its Director of Orchestra and Performances, Arturo Toscanini, whose genius did much to make the name of the theatre illustrious.

Subsequent to my study of singing, I was in the class for advanced composition at the *Conservatorio*, and with the other pupils of composition and singing I had the privilege of free admittance to *La Scala*. In Italy generally, there is every opportunity of hearing opera at very small expense, and in those early days, for the equivalent of sixpence, one could hear, for instance, Gounod's *Faust*, directed by Toscanini, with the full first-class orchestra of 150 instrumentalists and with many hundreds of performers on the stage; with Caruso in the title role; Chaliapine as Mephistopheles, Stracciari as Valentine, and Destinn as Marguerite. Opera is loved by all classes of the Italian people, from the simplest to the most intellectual, and surprisingly wise criticisms may often be heard among the general populace. In this country many people attend the opera mainly to hear again some

well-known melodies, but the Italians prefer most of all a *première* of a new work for the pleasure it affords of discussion and for the excitement surrounding its acceptance or refusal by the audience. Sometimes this excitement reaches a dangerous pitch, and heated exchanges of opinions have often developed into absolute pandemonium, as happened at the première of Debussy's *Peleas et Melisande*. Hostility to the new forms which Debussy introduced was anticipated, and some fifty of us students of the *Conservatorio* who appreciated the great merits of the work came provided with flat pieces of wood in our hands for the purpose of countering any hostile demonstrations. So successful were our efforts that we secured a fair hearing for the work, which, at the close of the performance, was acclaimed a success. Even Wagner, in the beginning, was faced with difficulties in Italy, for ethnic reasons and for the fact that his music differed in essentials from the type usually accepted in that country. Numerous obstacles had to be overcome before there was general acceptance of this amazing reformative genius, who achieved for music what Schiller, Goethe and Kant did for the regeneration of literature, poetry and philosophy. At the outset, the Italians gave a cold reception to Wagner's new conceptions of harmonies in general, to his manner of using voices as a means of expression, and to the slowness of the movements on the stage of his

mythological characters, in direct opposition to the quick development of the drama as portrayed in the music of Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi. I, who loved Wagner from the beginning of my musical life, availed myself of lectures, concerts and every other possible means to become acquainted with his new theories and his immortal themes. I attended all the Wagnerian productions at *La Scala* and have particularly vivid recollections of the *première* of *Tristan and Isolde*, which was attended by the great composer's son, Siegfried, who, full of emotion after the *finale*, embraced the conductor, Toscanini, and confessed to him that the Italian rendering increased the profound and mysterious character of his father's work. In *Tristan*, the passion of love is portrayed in the most tragic and overwhelming manner, and the transfiguration of *Isolde*, at the end of the opera, is a triumph of transending beauty which will ever remain a wonderful example of Wagner's inspiration and genius.

Amongst other notable institutions of music in Milan are The *Quartetto* Society, for the performance of chamber music, and The Milanese Orchestral Society, which is connected with *La Scala*, for the production of orchestral works. Mention could be made of countless celebrated musicians who studied at the *Conservatorio*, or who lived permanently in the City, but space limits reference here to a few of the better known, such

as Verdi, who lived and died in Milan; Puccini and Mascagni, both of whom studied in the *Conservatorio*; Catalani, who was Professor of Composition at the *Conservatorio*; Ponchielli, author of *Gioconda*, and Maestro of Composition, who numbered Puccini and Mascagni among his pupils; Boito, author of *Mephistophele*, who studied and lived in Milan, and Donizetti, born in Bergamo, twenty miles outside the City, who directed many of his operas at *La Scala*. Included among the more modern musicians associated with Milan are Giordano, Franchetti, Leoncavallo, Zandonai, Pizzetti and Respighi.

Among famous singers of modern times who have appeared at *La Scala*, the following might be mentioned: Galli Curci, Bori, Storchio, Burzio, Cigna, Caniglia, Tamagno, Caruso, Gigli, Schipa, Pinza, Martinelli, Battistini, Stracciari, Bonci and Chaliapine. Special reference must be made to John, Count MacCormack, who studied under Maestro Sabbatini. The purity and sweetness of his voice, the perfection of his production and the sincerity of his interpretation, place him amongst the greatest artists of his time, and his singing has given pleasure to countless multitudes throughout the world. Another outstanding Irish artist to bring honour to her native land is Margaret Burke-Sheridan, who sang for several years at *La Scala*, under the direction of Toscanini, by whom she was held in the highest esteem. In Puccini's operas,



JOHN COUNT McCORMACK

especially *Madame Butterfly*, she displayed her finest qualities and scored her greatest success. It could almost be said that the melodic lines of Puccini's works were created for her voice, so full of sweetness, yet so robust of tone.

It is impossible in so brief a sketch to convey even an approximate idea of the fullness and intensity of the musical life of Milan. I, who was born there, and there passed my early life in interesting study and intellectual enjoyment, feel that a true conception of its musical vitality can only be acquired by residence. But even the visitor to this beautiful city cannot fail to come under its spell. Here, indeed, may be felt the fascination of the musical hurricane which fills the air, creating an overpowering atmosphere of resounding beauty. In these surroundings every fibre of one's being becomes a sound, and every thought the pulsation of a dream, so that one soars to higher altitudes, where the masterly creations of musical genius bring joy to the senses and make eternal the sublime beauty of this art, of which Italy is a worthy cradle.

Dublin, 1939.

Opera

AMONGST the many mediums through which beauty is revealed there is one which has for its object the representation of the conflicting passions which stir humanity. This medium is the drama, and its operatic form provides the most poetic and direct means of representing, to the civilised world, the essence of moral and intellectual education. The theatre, through which one can experience emotional sensations like trepidation, the anxiety of love, the joy of living or the anguish of sorrow, also provides an escape from the tedious cares of every-day life, and kindles in the breast of man a spiritual strength tempered in the fire of art. It provides a mirror of mankind and of nature, reflecting their regenerative elements, their legends and history, as well as portraying the inevitable conflicts between vice and virtue, a study of which helps to guide the footsteps safely past the perilous pitfalls which line the path through life. It is difficult to match the purifying powers of tragedy, because sorrow, like fire, is itself a purifying element. Civilisation needs this sphere of dramatic

activity in which analysis tends to develop the talent of the keen observer and wherein the portrayal of human habits indicates a way to knowledge and spiritual satisfaction. The operatic offshoot grew from the harmonic fusion of those elements from which both heart and intellect draw delight, such as the movements of the masses, the people and their passions, the fascination of lovely voices, the greatness of orchestral instrumentation, the colourful costumes, the poetry and the scenery. Such is opera, which, with words and music, exalts virtue, thereby encouraging one to imitate it, and represents vice in such a manner that one may wish to avoid it. In this way is the love of fatherland stimulated by Schiller and Rossini in *William Tell*; the sacrifice of Alceste evinced by Euripides and Gluck; the horror of Faust revealed after his corruption of the simplicity of Marguerite; the tragic mystery of revenge unfolded in Hamlet and Orestes, and the consequences of jealousy in Othello. What lessons, flowing from the fountain of wisdom, reach us through these operas, and others like those which reveal the terror of Iago and his low perversity; the nobility of Desdemona in her sweet purity; the cynical sensuality of Carmen, and the senseless passion of Don Jose?

One of the richest periods of artistic development was the mediaeval, in which may be found the first indications of opera and of comic opera. In the year 1280 the troubadour Adam de la Hale composed for

the court of Robert II of Naples a very melodious musical work, already divided into little arias, ensembles and dances. It only remained to put his recitatives to music and introduce a dramatic choir, to arrive at the modern conception of opera. But the example of de la Hale was not followed in his period, in which only religious representations and mystic plays attained noteworthy development. Accordingly, the fourteenth century was reached with dramatic art divided into two forms, one imitating the pastorals, comedies and tragedies of the Graeco-Latin drama, and the other presenting luxurious performances, full of poetry, of instrumental music, and of dances. Opera, that fine flower of music, could have blossomed easily from the fusion of these two forms, were it not for the fact that the monody or solo singing which illustrates the dramatic incidents and is essential to the theatre, was not yet introduced. That was the period of the madrigals, with a basis of polyphony and counterpoint which stifled passion because of their difficult technique. Actually, only ancient Greece and modern Europe have yielded worthy examples of artistic manifestations with music. A study of Greek literature reveals that the ancients of that nation knew how to blend poetry and music, adding the power of song to widen the scope of the emotions expressed by their dramatic performers. But that aristocracy of art was destroyed during

the centuries of barbarian domination which followed, and not until about 1600 did the honour of reviving this sublime form of musical drama fall to the Academy of Florence, or to the *Camerata Bardi* of the Counts of Vernio. That Greek influence was still evident in the revival is obvious from the fact that in these first attempts at opera only recitatives are found, except in the case of a few works which also included arias. The pioneers of opera had available examples of declamation in the tragedies of Aeschylus, of nobility in the works of Sophocles, and of exquisite music in the compositions of Euripides. The operatic evolution which, for Italy, began in Florence, was confronted by many initial difficulties, chiefly because there were no existing models to work on, as the compositions of the ancient Greeks had almost completely disappeared, and there remained, for the most part, only works relating to the second century after Christ. In the early operas, the recitatives were appropriate to the sentiments expressed by the words, and, in the most tragic moments, the voice was triumphant over all, with *portamenti*, and *legati* or *staccati* which almost resembled the florid singing of the eighteenth century. The new style of singing in monodic form was created by Caccini, who made his name with a work called *The New Music*, and who may be considered the precursor of Pergolese, Gluck, Bellini and Wagner. In

Euridice, Peri introduced a more realistic style, which prevailed until the advent of that powerful and fantastic genius, Monteverdi, who evolved a great scheme of opera in his works, full of dramatic sense, with recitatives more definite and more melodic, and with arias rich in variety and in musical ideas. One of his compositions, the superb *Orfeo*, embodies all these qualities, with the addition that in it the counterpoint is elaborated, and the orchestral instrumentation is of the greatest polyphonic value, considering the period in which it was written. Monteverdi was the first composer to introduce duets, and the first to employ the overture at the beginning of the opera. The choir was also much used by him, and in the orchestra he formed the quartet of strings with which he achieved a solid sonority.

During the seventeenth century the progress of Italian opera was marked by the works of musicians like Peri, Monteverdi, Cavalli, and Alessandro Scarlatti. Meanwhile, outside Italy, the development of opera continued. In Germany there were the works of Keiser; and in England, Purcell with his *Dido* reached a great dramatic height; while Lully founded the French opera, drawing inspiration from the Ballet of Louis XIV. The initiative still remained largely with Italy, however, and with his work *La Serva Padrona* Pergolesi began a musical revolution during the eighteenth century,

by which time opera was established as a definite aesthetic need in most parts of the civilised world. A matter of great importance then very much in evidence was the conflict between the musicians of the north and those of the south, which culminated in the widely-known dispute between Gluck and Piccinni. On the side of the Teutonic Race, a new operatic ideal was ushered in by Mozart, in whom the realization of the harmonic union of all the musical and aesthetic elements gave rise to that divine effluence of beauty which distinguishes almost any fragment of his work. After Mozart there followed a long line of geniuses, and opera passed from evolution to evolution, until a period of enormous importance in the history of music, the period of Rossini-Wagner, was reached. Rossini was immortalised by *The Barber of Seville*, and a new musical era was established by Wagner, since whose day there has been a continuous stream of operas by numerous composers of talent.

All the manifestations of loveliness blend in the noble form of art called Opera, and to that form the spirit will ever turn when seeking the superior atmosphere of sounds and the ethereal beauty to which all the muses in chorus make their poetic offerings.

Dublin, 1937.



GIOACHINO ROSSINI. A REPRODUCTION OF
A LITHOGRAPH MADE FROM A PHOTOGRAPH



[KIB]

Richard Wagner

RICHARD WAGNER

Rossini-Wagner

The history of music, like that of the other arts, may be divided into two main periods, which may be called *definite* periods and *transitional* periods. A *definite* period may be regarded as one in which appears an outstanding genius, who, by the creation of forms hitherto unknown, marks a new era in musical development. *Transitional* periods are generally represented by composers of considerable talent, some seeking inspiration from the past, and others striving to anticipate the future with the attempted creation of new forms. Although the composers of the *transitional* periods may not succeed in creating anything new, many illuminating sparks of genius may nevertheless be found in their works. Every period is marked by a formula, which the genius of the period develops to its maximum, on arrival at which point all possibility of further development is lost, and it is then necessary to seek a new formula to replace the preceding one. And so the search continues for a formula which, in its

essence, is capable of manifesting the progressive emotions of the soul.

Study of the Rossini-Wagner period shows that it was one of the most interesting in the history of musical evolution. At the close of the eighteenth century there was not a composer who had the courage of saying, with Saint Simon, "Arise, as you have great things to accomplish"; no one who could find inspiration in the words, "Arise and look to the heights where you will see enormous difficulties, but having surmounted them, future generations will compensate you by their admiration and devotion."

Art moves from stage to stage, with the progression of humanity, of which it reflects the soul. The ending of one epoch heralds the beginning of another, and it is the duty of the man of genius to illuminate the new epoch with his light.

Music was in a transitional period at the end of the eighteenth century, and though often full of vivid colour, it was only imitation and not of a lasting character. An effort to perfect an old formula was evident. There were changes of styles, but no originality of ideas, and the public were fashionable but unconvinced admirers. This, then, was a period of transition between a form of the past and one that was yet unborn. There was needed a great soul with genius and faith sufficient to overcome difficulties and prejudices in order to

lift music to the heights it had occupied in older generations.

The superficial public of the time preferred to be amused rather than to be moved; to have joy without laughter, sorrow without tears. So the operas of that period were full of pleasing songs, separated by long recitatives with interminable cadenzas, in order to provide singers of repute with the opportunity of showing their ability. They were works without a definite conception of continuity, with music that was the reflection of a superficial life, and not the expression of a social faith. Italy and Germany, in particular, were concerned in the period because of their endeavours to begin a new musical era. In Germany, there was a tendency to realism, and a reaction to the mystic speculations that had predominated for centuries. In Italy, on the contrary, a spiritual movement followed a period of positivism, for which reason there were hopes that the new genius would spring from the people of that country. These hopes were not realised, however, for it was Germany that gave birth to the man destined to raise operatic music to new life.

In all manifestations of life there are two dominating elements, Man, the individual, and Humanity, the collective. It is between these two forces that the whole development of thought takes place, be it in philosophy or in the arts. One form is analytic, the other is synthetic. One ends in

materialism through an exaggerated analysis, and the other ends in an unlimited mysticism, by its conception of unreal synthesis; two opposite tendencies, which could give a perfect form only when blended. These two forms, when applied to music, are known as Melody and Harmony; melody the individual, harmony the collective.

The Italian music was essentially melodic, reflecting the philosophic speculations of the Middle Ages, in which the individual, particularly in Italy, reached the highest power. It was impulsive, and influenced by the beauty of the country, with its fruits and multiplicity of colours; it reflected the fascinating lights of the Italian spring, captured the thunder and lightning of those sudden hurricanes that assail the land, and was calmed eventually by the perfumed air of peaceful eventides full of poetry and languor. Art, therefore, in this period was a reflection of individual impulses, symbolising the beauty of nature; it was art for art alone, and not representative of the universe, for which reason it was incomplete although beautiful. The inspired melodies were the expressions of different sentiments deprived of a logical connecting link.

In this transitional period there was need of a genius who could direct all these tendencies towards the light, and, who, with his own powerful personality, would mark the epoch with a definite character of synthesis. And such a

genius appeared in the person of Gioachino Rossini (1792) who, supremely melodic in his creations, was of a greatness never attained by his contemporaries. Even in *William Tell*, which almost suggests a plunge into the future, an examination of the instrumentation and the harmonies leads to the conclusion that these also are of a melodic character.

Rossini was a genius of synthesis who also created melodies of the purest type, some of which brought tears to the eyes of the public of his time, whilst others amused them intensely; but he did not find the formula that would have initiated a new musical era. On the other hand, an examination of the operatic works of the German School of the same period finds Weber making a noble effort to blend the two musical elements, melody and harmony. This highly talented composer represented in synthesis the German tradition, with its philosophy of mystic shades, and in his works, the harmonic developments have a character of decided superiority. Also in his creations were sparkling lights which, however, resembled rather the subdued beauty of eventide than the luminous freshness of the dawn. Weber closed a period but did not open a new one. Neither did Meyerbeer, who, imitating the Italian School in its melodic conceptions, created works more of effect and of fashion than of sincere impulse.

Unable to find a new rejuvenating formula, German music was drifting towards an indefinite mysticism. The Italian school and the German school were kept apart by two different tendencies. In which Nation would be born the genius, who, by uniting the two forces, would provide the impulse to begin a new musical era? It was fated that the new light would shine out of Germany, and its source was Wagner, born in 1813. The influence which this genius exercised on music in the nineteenth century was one of the most astounding events in the history of the art of sound in its revolutions, developments and progress. He conceived that the two factors in music, melody, the individual factor, and harmony, the social factor, needed blending in order to produce the art which he called the *Music of the Future*, and he brought those two forces to such a point of perfection that one became the spontaneous source of the other. Wagner took the finest elements from the two schools, and with a vigour and courage that could spring only from an unshakable faith, and with an imagination that almost touched the divine, he flooded the world with torrents of music, the irresistible and fascinating nature of which has no precedent in history.

Wagner, in his vision of beauty, realised that, in order to renew operatic music, the co-operation of all the arts in artistic communion was necessary. He conceived the poetry for his own music, and

he made use of everything associated with music that could raise it up to become a new artistic symbol, possessing forms hitherto unthought of, and new intentions. He depicted sentiments and characters with themes that represented them; themes often of a Michelangelesque power, that once heard would ever remain in the memories and in the hearts of the listeners. Wagner called these themes *leitmotifs*, and modifying the rhythms, the harmonies, the tone colours, he used them in order to portray the different intensity of sentiments, or the different psychological moods of the characters that they represented. By this procedure he succeeded in obtaining a mysterious sense of continuity in his works, or throughout a number of them, as in the case of the four operas which make up *The Ring*. In this great conception themes belonging to the first opera are found recurring in the second, and so on, until, in the last opera, *The Twilight of the Gods*, all the themes are recalled in a wonderful synthesis.

Wagner redeemed music from the position of *effect for the sake of effect* into which it had fallen, and elevated it to the position of a dignified expression of love, passion and beauty. He transformed the orchestra from the servile state of being a mere accompaniment of the voice, to a powerful means of expression, so that the different instruments could, with the psychology of their different tones, express sentiments and dramatic

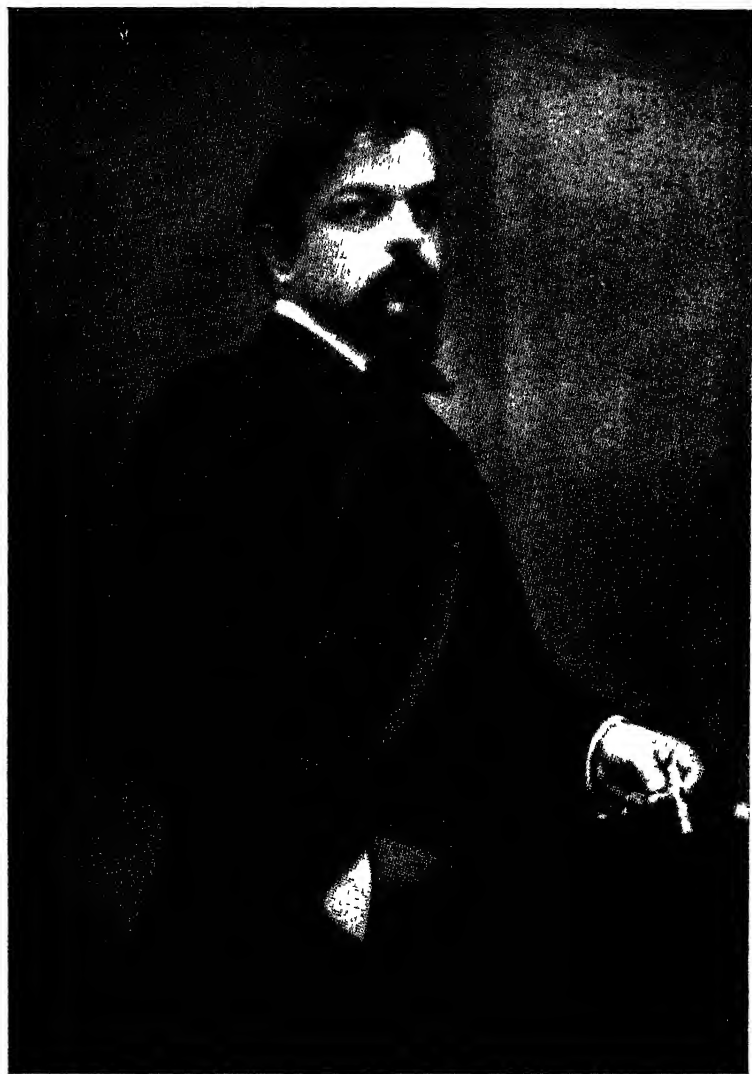
situations. And, when different sentiments 'were at the same time contrasting, he described them by different themes, clashing one against another with contrapoints of surprising beauty. Thus began Wagner's ascension as a new star, giving to the world a light and a warmth that will continue to move humanity for generations.

There is an overwhelming crescendo of greatness from the simple and Italian forms of *Rienzi* and *The Flying Dutchman*, full of hurricane and fantasy, to *Tannhauser* and *Lohengrin*, where myth and imagination blend artistically; to *Tristan and Isolde*, full of human passion; to *The Meistersingers*, genially satirical; to the powerful conception of *The Ring* divided into *Rheingold*, *Valkyrie*, *Siegfried* and *Twilight of the Gods*, which is the conception of a superhuman power, inspired by an eternal philosophical thesis; to the spiritual apotheosis of *Parsifal*, of a transcendental form.

The power of Wagner's music, even to-day, has a great influence on musical creations. After him, notwithstanding the work of some men of undoubted talent, no further definite forward step in operatic music has been made. We are again in a period of transition. But those of us who conceive music as a sublime and inspiring art, as the most powerful means of spiritual refinement, as an influence that brings man into closer contact with

God, do not despair of further developments; for music is as eternal as history and the epopee which accompany the evolutions of humanity. So long as the sun refreshes us with his warmth and light, so long as nature delights us with her symphonies of colours, so long as love shatters us with its tragedies, or uplifts humanity with its passionate poems, so long will music live.

Dublin, 1936.



CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Opera After Wagner

IN the arts and in science, the period which follows the manifestations and irradiations of a new genius is one of confusion, uncertainty, imitation and disorder. So powerful and of such importance to the music of his time was Wagner's influence that all discussions and opinions on it must be carefully considered before they are accepted as absolute. Wagner disregarded the past, and told the world of a new future of sounds. In different forms and with different results, the nations felt the influence of this new genius who, with majestic power and grace, forged a new style; a new conception of drama in music. He came like a blazing meteor, overwhelming everything in his path and dazzling all with the brilliance of his light. In his wake was a period of indecision for the musicians who had nothing new to express with their music, and of hope for the mediocrities who saw their salvation in the imitation of the Wagnerian forms. Musicians who had already achieved fame did not greet joyfully the advent of the new genius, whose coming heralded the devalua-

tion of their own creations. Accordingly, there were some like Meyerbeer who laughed at Wagner, denouncing him as a man of negative qualities and devoid of talent; others like Berlioz who liked to treat him as a mediocrity and a dilettante. These reactions may be attributed in part to the lustre of the new luminary, which inevitably created jealousy, that consistent element of destruction.

Wagner exercised a deep influence on grand opera, widening its scope with new harmonic and melodic conceptions, and by sequences which always reached a dramatic climax of lordly power and beauty; by new ways of using the different instruments in the orchestra, and by the innovation of *leitmotifs* to represent the different characteristics and sentiments in his works. So strong was this influence that few could escape its fascination, which even extended to men like Verdi, in whose later works it is easily traced. This is particularly true of *Falstaff*, in which the atmosphere of *The Meistersingers* is clearly evident in the conception of the orchestra. Some composers, like Humperdinck, confessed openly their intention to model their works on Wagner's style, and did so, as may be observed in *Hansel and Gretel* and *King's Sons*. Others lacked the talent to resist the influence of Wagner and were consequently overwhelmed by that avalanche of sounds which he released. It had to happen thus, because an epoch ended with Rossini, and a new era opened with Wagner. With

the dispersal of the confusion and trepidation which marked their initial appearance, the new forms of Wagner were accepted. Then began a reaction to get away from his influences, or at least to discover something that could establish a further phase in the progress of music. Of many such endeavours, the efforts of the fundamentally different schools established by Strauss and Debussy are worthy of analysis, in order to ascertain their part in the development of operatic music.

Richard Strauss, born in Munich, in 1864, was the son of an able musician who played the horn in the Royal Orchestra in that city. Richard was himself a pianist at four, and at six he was composing works which gave clear indication of his talent. During his study of composition he made the acquaintance of Ritter, who became his friend and tutor, and who initiated him into the great lines of Wagner and into the philosophic principles of Schopenhauer. Although religious in his way of life, Strauss seems almost pagan in his aesthetic conceptions. In *Salome*, for instance, having saturated the protagonist with the most morbid sensuality and baseness, he almost seems to rejoice in the suppression of her dying cries of pain and despair, which he achieves by the introduction of shrill notes for the wind instruments, and by permitting every section of the orchestra to shriek and moan, as though he thus wishes to symbolise the punishment

of the whole world for its degeneracy and immoralities.

Strauss invariably appears to develop his climax in the middle of his works, introducing at the conclusion a *diminuendo* suggestive almost of an indefinite nostalgic melancholy, or sense of sadness, which seems to reflect his intimate convictions, or, perhaps, the philosophic speculations which he absorbed through the influence of Schopenhauer. It is like a drop of bitterness remaining at the bottom of a foaming cup. At the close of his works, one is somehow left with an impression of northern landscapes, imbued with the pain of cold rain, persistent and inexorable. Yet Strauss, loving the sun, the light, and the clear and colourful land of Italy, yearned for the warmth of the south. Accordingly, it is not unlikely that his was a synthetic culture, based on the philosophy of the Germany of his period, and exercising an influence which almost overpowered his natural artistic tendencies. At the close of his musical poems, his heroes seem to languish instead of rising in triumphant apotheosis. Sad and forlorn, they droop neath a melancholic mantle and rest in the midst of desolate dreams. Although Strauss seems supremely Germanic in his surprising harmonisations, the influence of the Italian sun he loved so well may be detected in his melodic lines. This influence was also apparent in his vivacious humour when he visited Milan for the production of his opera, *Salome*. Yet, although he



RICHARD STRAUSS

assimilated external influences, he always imposed on them his own decisive and definite individuality. In his music one can sense a powerful will, commanding every emotion, and sometimes arranging a unique union of contrasting elements to create a homogeneous whole of surpassing greatness. Strauss is the epitome of the German desire to dominate, that racial characteristic which is depicted in *Zarathustra* by Nietzsche, genius of a Germany already dreaming of world conquest. It might even be said that the theories advanced in *Zarathustra* had passed through the filter of Straussian thoughts, to form a solid faculty of powerful will, capable of harnessing all emotional activities and directing them towards an organic whole of sublime superiority. The fascination of this movement in his music and the workings of his will are communicated to the masses by means of a skilful and mighty technique inspired, perhaps, by Wagnerian concepts, but nevertheless embodying all the characteristics of Strauss's own personality. A notable fact about the musical thoughts of Strauss is the strength of their technical realisation, which ever was and still remains one of the most persistent problems of composers. The task of translating the hazy characteristics of mental images and of seeing them with sufficient intensity to fix them on sheets by means of musical notes and definite rhythms is difficult and disconcerting. It often seems impossible to secure a fixed,

substantial and accurate reproduction of those abstract ideas, for the spirit, with its ghostly and indefinite qualities, always struggles against positive and absolute matter.

Of vastly different character is the school established by Claude Debussy, born at St. Germain-en-Laye, near Paris, in 1862. Debussy developed a new form of application of chords, apart from his innovations in harmonic and melodic fields. The influence of his style on musical revolution and development is found, above all, in his impressionism, combined with exquisite taste, the triumph of which dominates his music, so lightly tinged with delicate colours and deprived of excessive noises that it seems to suggest a kind of silence which penetrates the soul, awakening sensations of exquisite delicacy. In his music there are neither hurricanes nor frightening cataclysms, but the vague and nebulous lights of dewy dawns and shimmering rainbow hazes, the soft murmurings of flowers at sundown, and a dreamy sweetness that touches the soul like a trembling kiss.

One of the most characteristic of the Debussy reforms was the resumption of the spoken recitative. Avoiding the practice of his predecessors, who gave the recitative almost a form of singing with exaggerated emphasis, Debussy successfully adapted it to the French language, the sounds of which do not contain the angularity found, for instance, in German. By keeping the extension of

the recitative at a level of speech of everyday usage, he endowed it with a more natural and human character, as in *Peleas et Melisande*, a work which represents a historical achievement of great importance in the development of operatic music in France. Although a sense of calm sweetness, amounting almost to poetic melancholy, seems to permeate the opera, and causes the composer to be visualised as one enveloped in the soothing mists of a pleasurable dream, the drama nevertheless develops with great power. In contrast to the overwhelming lines of Wagner's works, in which the glorious effects of the climax are obtained by the thundering of different themes in irresistible orchestral combinations, Debussy's art, playing on the more intimate emotions, sometimes seems to suggest the suppression of the lamentations of a grief-stricken humanity. With his orchestral murmurings, he penetrates the mysterious labyrinth of one's being, almost silently offering his sorrow, and touching the profound essence of the soul with caressing sounds. His music acts like a regenerating dew or the balm of a perfumed breeze on those who love to dream or wander in the quiet shades of night, or to admire the delicate nuances of a romantic painter, like Cremona; or who seek the poetry of northern fogs, where reality seems enveloped in vaporous fleece; or who prefer indefinite landscapes to the defined colourings of the noon-day sun of the south.

To Strauss and Debussy two different conceptions of music owe their origin. In one is a hurricane bursting with all its fury, in the other a sorrow which whispers of its intimate anguish. In *Peleas et Melisande* the heroine's death is symbolised by a few sounds suggesting the end of a flame. A worthy contrast to this is the death of Isolde, by Wagner, with its series of progressions of increasing sonority, when the entire orchestra seems to burst into a despairing cry of deep intensity. The birth of these two opposite schools attracted many imitators and drew the anxious alliance of young musicians. Then came the great war of 1914, to which the reaction of the realm of art was a period of silence and immobility. Of the composers after Wagner, only the works of recognised musicians continued to be performed. The music of Strauss with that of some others of minor importance reigned in Germany, and in France, Ravel, who had already made his name, followed Gounod, Thomas, Saint Saens, Charpentier, Bizet, Delibes, Massenet and Debussy. In Spain the compositions of Albeniz, de Falla and Granados remained in favour, while the modern music of Russia was provided by Tschaikowsky, Glinka, Mussorgsky, Korsakov, Stravinsky; and the Slovenes were represented by Smetana and Smareglia. Of the Italian moderns after Verdi, who continued to devote all the power of his productive genius to music, the next most important

works presented were those of Ponchielli who reached fame with *La Gioconda*; of Catalani, whose melodies overflowed with melancholy and poetry; of Boito, composer of *Mephistophele*; of Mascagni who, from the start of his life as a composer of opera, took his place amongst the immortals with *Cavalleria Rusticana*, which he followed with *Ratcliff*, *Rantzau*, *Iris*, *Amico Fritz*, *Isabeau*, *Parisina*, *Zanetto*, *Nerone* and others; of Puccini, one of the foremost representatives of Italian musical expression, whose deep culture enabled him to adorn his unforgettable melodies with delicate and exquisite harmonies, rich in nostalgic beauty and in the immeasurably precious quality of the ideal Italian spirit of their inspiration; of Giordano, Franchetti, Cilea, Leoncavallo and many others whose reputations were established before Europe was devastated by the infernal storm of blood and fire.

Peace brought with it no period of artistic resurgence in music, but it introduced one of economic preoccupation and sorrowful reaction to the tragic years of the war. Consequently, the many who were anxious to forget the immediate past showed preference for a superficial type of music which enabled them to do so. This gave rise to a further period of inactivity and decadence, during which most people went to the opera more to exhibit themselves as intellectuals than through genuine appreciation of this beautiful

form of music. As time progressed, courage emanated from a consoling peace, and reconstruction commenced in different countries, some of which had been almost completely destroyed. Each concentrated its energy in an effort to regain confidence in life, and to rediscover its own soul, stricken by the terror of war, whilst, at the same time, seeking to establish the value of whatever remained, and of those elements which were about to develop or to reappear. The political factors of the reconstruction had grave repercussions on the artistic creations of the period. For this reason, certain works were held in high repute which, in reality, owed their importance solely to an exaggerated exaltation of patriotic sentiments. Wagner was still supreme and inexorable, the flower of his art blooming in the powerful and fascinating light of its own environment. But the nations were stirring, and eventually there began anxious efforts to discover a new era in music. How far this objective remains from being accomplished, despite many struggles and much heartbreaking endeavour, may be observed from an analysis of the results which have been achieved up to the present.

In France, the melodic and harmonic conceptions of Debussy were born together, one being the poetical and logical compensation of the other. After Debussy's death, his imitators found themselves in a sort of *cul-de-sac*, composing lovely

melodies which, however, they destroyed by strange and unsuitable harmonisations. Accordingly, with the exception of the artistry and great talent of the genius Ravel, and the lesser light that shone from Muret and Fevrier, there is nothing new in France, although there are many composers of indefinite tendencies. In Germany, too, there is no one worthy of note but Strauss, who still bears the palm alone. Continuing the analysis with an examination of the situation in Italy, but omitting consideration of the works of Puccini, who dwelt in the sublime heights, it will be found that efforts to open a new pathway into the uncertain darkness of the future were made by a group of young musicians, amongst them Montemezzi, who is much on the style of Wagner, especially in his particularly interesting *Love of Three Kings*, and who wrote also *Gallurese*, *Hellera*, *The Ship*, and *The Night of Zoraima*; Mulè a good musician, although rather strange in his harmonisations, as evinced in *The Baroness of Carini*, *The Wolf*, *The Little Nun of the Fountain* and *Daphne*; the essentially Italian Lualdi, talented critic, man of letters and writer of some of the libretti for his own operas, who strives with his style to give a new soul to his compositions, which include *The Marriage of Haura*, *The King's Daughter* and *La Granceola*; de Sabata, whose instrumentations illustrate the difficulties which he experiences in endeavouring to escape the fascina-

tion of Strauss, of whom he is an ardent admirer. He is the composer of *Driada*, and is a conductor of consummate ability, to which art he has dedicated himself almost completely since his recent appointment as Director of *La Scala*, Milan, in succession to Toscanini; Pick-Mangiagalli, the present Director of the *Conservatorio* of Milan, an excellent pianist and composer of music of good taste although a little on the French style, who wrote *Berceuse*, *The Golden Tree* and *Kisses and Quarrels*; Cassella, composer of *The Serpent Woman*, who uses strange contrasting harmonies with discords of extraordinary effects, is an excellent pianist and a man of deep culture; Malipiero, a sound musician who enjoys high repute abroad, particularly in England, who wrote *The Goldonian Comedies*, *The Myth of the Changed Son*, *Julius Caesar* and many other operas; Lattuada who, with great courage, set to music *The Tempest* of Shakespeare, *Wanda*, an Indian subject, and *Don Giovanni*, winner of an Italian Government prize; he also set to music, after the style of the eighteenth century, Moliere's *Les Precieuses Ridicules*, an opera, full of lovely melodies and original situations, which was performed with enormous success in *La Scala*, and later in others of the world's best theatres: Lattuada's music is strong in dramatic power and full of modern colours; Wolf-Ferrari, who composed simple and very pleasant music, wrote operas

in the eighteenth century style; Pedrollo, composer of *Crime and Punishment*, *The Shadow of The Glen*, and *Mary Magdalene* in which sweet melodies harmonise with fine art. Some of these Italian musicians formed themselves into a group which they called *Musicians of The Twentieth Century*.

Amongst the most modern composers are four Italians, Alfano, Pizzetti, Respighi and Zandonai, who, in my opinion, have reached the higher pinnacles of musical perfection, particularly in the operatic sphere, in which they have bravely endeavoured to find a new light to penetrate the fog of the transition period which still persists in stifling all who search for a new regenerating form. Franco Alfano, of a vast intellect capable of assimilating anything possessing elements of beauty, whilst still very young composed *The Resurrection*, adapted from Tolstoy's work, in which he clearly showed an ideal conception of music which immediately established his reputation. Steeped in the classics, he later studied polyphony, enriching his music with symphonic elements, as exemplified by *The Shadow of Don Giovanni* which also bears choral characteristics indicating a return to the glorious Italian School of polyphony. Other compositions followed, including his best work, *The Legend of Sakuntala*, for which he also wrote the libretto. Alfano had the honour of being chosen to complete the opera *Turandot* which Puccini had left unfinished at his death.

Were it not for space limitations, one could write profusely of Ildebrando Pizzetti, a highly cultured man who touched on every form of music with complete success. As critic in one of the most important and authoritative newspapers in Milan, his analysis of music gave positive proof of his talent before he ever attained fame as a composer. In an article solely devoted to consideration of operatic music, however, I must confine my observations to that particular sphere in which he has had such a distinguished career. In the beginning, Pizzetti was helped considerably by the friendship and admiration of the great Gabriele d'Annunzio, with whom he collaborated closely, and some of whose works he set to music. A student of philosophy, literature and history, he later worked on the Wagnerian conception of balanced musical and poetical elements, wherein the one compensates the other to form an artistic whole. His first opera, *Fedra*, was followed by the big lines of *Debora e Jaele* which really seemed to mark a forward step towards a new era in Italy. In his manipulation of the artistic expressions in this opera, Pizzetti appears to pry into the past in a way which suggests an effort to find a link with Monteverde, whose harmonic procedure and monodic manner of articulating the words has been adopted by him. In 1928 came *Fra Gherardo* which immediately won the acclamation of both public and critics when performed at *La Scala*, under the direction of Toscanini. This opera,

together with *The Stranger*, which was presented in 1930, showed to advantage the great qualities and powerful personality of the maestro, as did also *L'Orseolo*, his most recent work. Pizzetti has lately been appointed Director of the *Conservatorio* in Rome, having occupied since 1923 the same responsible position in the *Conservatorio* of Milan.

The name of Ottorino Respighi is well known in England, although less on account of his operas than through his orchestral works, of which his symphonic poems, *The Fountains of Rome* and *The Pines of Rome*, have often been performed in London. This brilliant man was a great admirer of Wagner and Strauss, whose influence may be observed in his earlier works, which, however, also hold ample evidence of his efforts to free himself of this fascination which otherwise would have smothered his own personality. It is in *Belfagor* that Respighi really finds himself and spreads his wings for a glorious ascent. His next work, *The Submerged Bell*, is full of beauty, and he, perhaps, reaches his highest point with *Maria Egiziaca*. All the colourful characteristics of Italian opera are maintained in this lovely and human work which he has embellished with a technically perfect embroidery of instrumentation. *The Flame* and *Lucrezia*, other works of his, were performed before the hopes of a renaissance in Italian music were shattered by the sudden death of this talented and powerful artist.

The most celebrated of contemporary Italian musicians, both at home and abroad, is Riccardo Zandonai. A novel by Charles Dickens provided the subject for his very successful first opera, *The Grasshopper of the Fireplace*, and this was followed by *Conchita*, which showed the great possibilities of his talent. But it is *Francesca da Rimini*, perhaps the most representative expression of national spirit emanating from recent Italian operatic manifestations, that has definitely established Zandonai as a man of powerful genius, possessing an absolute personal style of his own. From this point onwards, he has enriched his crown of fame with jewels of precious melodies, extravagantly adorned with the most colourful harmonisations by his refined knowledge of musical technique. Amongst his operatic pearls are *La Via della Finestra* and *Romeo and Juliet*, full of moving music and an elevated sense of poetry, *The Cavaliers of Ekebu*, *Julian*, *Una Partita* and *The Strength of Love*.

It seems evident, from this brief analysis of progress made in the sphere of opera after Wagner, that the most successful efforts to find new horizons came from the Italian moderns, amongst whose notable works are some which will remain as milestones marking the road towards the operatic productions of the future. Yet, clever and important though these experiments are, in reality they only

amount to small stages in the search for the unknown form with which, perhaps, a new genius will some day bring about another renaissance. Meanwhile the tremendous figure of the unshakable Wagner dominates the musical realm of opera, overpowering everything with his irresistible fascination, his hurricane of sounds and his divine melodies of infinite sweetness. He remains like a colossal luminous column, from which these men of talent form a sort of chain, ever extending until the links of their courageous efforts will be united in synthesis by a new genius who will give them the characteristics of his own powerful personality. Then a new musical era shall have dawned, but only the future can tell its source, and the time and manner of its coming.

Dublin, 1940.

Opera In The Open Air

LOVE of opera is inherent in the Italian people, whose governments, attaching great importance to this form of art, have ever striven to maintain it at a very high standard, both by enlisting the best intellectual assistance, and by providing monetary aid. Much capital is required to produce opera in a proper manner, and, unfortunately, from a financial point of view, opera is seldom profitable. In Italy, not many years ago, the government decided to promote the staging of opera in the open-air, throughout the country, in order to cover even partially the inevitable deficits arising from the indoor productions. Two northern cities particularly distinguished by the impetus which they gave to this new movement were Verona and Milan. In the latter, the outdoor performances served to fill in with an uninterrupted chain of operatic productions in the open-air, during the months of June, July and August, the off-season which falls between the closing of *La Scala*, towards the end of May, and the autumnal season, which opens in the *Dal Verme* Theatre at the beginning of September.

It is difficult for people living in northern

countries to conceive, even vaguely, the beauty and grandeur of these open-air operatic performances. The Italian climate is, of course, ideal for out-of-door performances. The small charge for admission attracts enormous attendances, and as the production costs are comparatively low there is a good margin of profit, which is incorporated in the subsidy allocated to indoor opera.

In order to form some idea of the vastness of the open-air auditorium in which the operas are performed, one should try to visualise a gigantic horseshoe, with the bend rising to about fifty feet, and the two prongs gradually descending, step by step, towards the enormous parterre, beyond which is situated an almost limitless stage, with beautiful scenery flood-lit by many-coloured lights. All around are thousands of seats, densely packed with people. Powerful projectors, operating behind and in front of the public, cast a variety of fascinating colours on the stage, below the level of which is placed the orchestra. Altogether, the scene presented is of surpassing splendour, with the stars above twinkling in an azure sky and the pale moon oft-times smiling down in appreciation of this beautiful and vivid panorama of man's creation. I have never seen anything to match the fantasy and fascination of an open-air performance of *Aida*, which I attended in the grounds of Sforzesco's Castle, in Milan. The stage was resplendent in a blaze of colour, and the divine

melodies seemed to acquire more poetical qualities and infinite characteristics when no walls of stone interposed to limit their flight. Overhead, the moon and the stars appeared to listen in ecstasy, while, at the close of each act, the fresh night air assimilated the applause which was enthusiastically expressed by more than sixteen thousand spectators. It was an unforgettable night. Later, I was one of twenty-six thousand who heard *La Bohème* and *Norma* at the Arena, in Milan.

From the first forms of opera in the open-air, in Italy, there developed under the direction of Mascagni the so-called *Carro di Tespi Lirico*, which derived its name from the historical Greek Thespian Theatre. Travelling in special trucks, it moves from one place to another with great ease, bringing the best of opera to every part of the country. The seating accommodation, which is moved in skeleton form capable of rapid assembly, is largely made up of steel tubes very similar to those used in the construction of houses in this country. The tubular sections are screwed together, and, inside twenty-four hours, can be made ready to seat many thousands of people. The artists and the orchestra travel individually, on their own, and, because all are already prepared for a fixed selection of operas, fully rehearsed and perfected in every minute detail, it only remains for them to present themselves for the performances, and everything proceeds with

smoothness and precision. In this way, opéra is brought to the most remote places where little was previously known of the theatre generally, and where this form of music was but a dream. This lofty educational movement is, indeed, worthy of a nation like Italy, which has always considered music to be one of the most powerful means of uplifting the spirit. For music is within all of us, and in the harmony of sounds we find inspiration that moves the soul and makes us think more purely of God, and love all that is beautiful and eternal in creation.

It is possible that this movement could have a parallel in Ireland, especially since opera appeals to many of the Irish people. Opportunities of enjoying this form of art could be extended to the public in general by means of open-air theatres, provided that the difficulties presented by the climate could first be overcome; and, in these days of rapid progress in every sphere, it is not impossible that a solution of that problem could be found. The open-air theatre could provide a means of imparting to the people a love and appreciation of everything that is beautiful in music. Creative ability, also, would be stimulated, for the efforts of men of genius often wither and die for lack of the incentive which the appreciation and encouragement of an educated musical public can alone supply. What new delights could be brought to the masses if it became possible, over-

coming the problem of location, to stage operatic productions on soft summer nights amid the verdant freshness and varied perfumes of our many beautiful parks or on the spacious lawns of the lovely demesnes in which Ireland abounds. Amid such surroundings, art united in a divine embrace with nature, would indicate a path leading to new realms of artistic endeavour and to fresh sources of spiritual happiness. And, since the Irish are particularly fond of singing, such a movement would be of great importance to singers, because it would provide opportunities and an atmosphere in which artists gifted with intelligence and good vocal qualities might achieve the highest success. Our best elements, who are now forced to emigrate to countries properly organised in this artistic sphere, could remain at home, attracted and encouraged by the improved musical facilities. Newspapers could help by affording more space for discussions on music generally, and the different forms of opera in particular. A cultured music critic, conscious of his mission, could accomplish a great deal of good with articles of sincere criticism and artistic analysis. Agencies could be established which could help to re-awaken faith in national productions, and to convince the public that, with proper guidance, great things could be accomplished with Irish talent, instead of our suffering the humiliation of being reduced to applaud decrepit foreign celebrities who often

reach us with little else besides their good names. In the case of singers, particularly, the voice is sometimes but a fond memory.

Local Feiseanna deserve great credit for having collected and brought to light many beautiful Irish airs which might otherwise have been lost. The Feiseanna could extend their good work by arranging competitions designed to encourage compositions with libretti and music of Irish characteristics, so that little by little, it would be possible to lay the foundations of a national opera which would be Irish both in form and style. This desired end might be brought nearer by the production of opera in the open-air. The Irish climate presents, of course, an obvious problem, but a solution might be found in the use of marquees, or of a light and widely spaced frame-work, capable of rapid assembly, over which a canvas covering could be drawn, zip-like, should a whim of the elements threaten disaster.

What a privilege it would be to witness the musical renaissance of this ancient and noble country, which has fought so long and with such valour, and suffered so much, to realise her legitimate aspirations? Then the glory of the infinite light shining upon her would erase the memories of the darkness of the past, and the years of suffering would be rewarded when her sons would produce songs of a new era, radiating love and joy throughout an Ireland free and happy.

Milan, 1937.

All Who Can Should Sing

Man always sang, and will for ever sing, because singing is for him both a necessity and a joy.

In 1937, lecturing to the British Medical Association in Belfast, Sir Milson Rees, the famous throat specialist, had some startling things to say about singing, the sum total of which amounted to the affirmation that nobody should sing. The following are a few extracts from his lecture :— . . . *Nature never intended the human race to sing . . . Singing was an acquired accomplishment into the service of which had been pressed certain organs not intended for it . . . Singers after a long and heavy opera, were often thoroughly exhausted. . . . Only few could take such parts as Siegfried or Brunhilde, without injuring their chords. That was why singers, particularly tenors, had a very short singing life . . . Singers' voices inevitably deteriorated with age.*

I feel that Sir Milson did not mean that nobody should sing, because a laryngologist of his fame would hardly make such a positive statement. He probably intended to convey that the two ligaments by which sound is produced were not given by God

to mankind to make all men singers, any more than that hands were given to make all persons pianists. If this be what Sir Milson meant, his statement could, of course, be accepted as correct.

Primitive man used his voice in order to make noises which in war might frighten his enemies, or in peace might express his love. In these noises there were different shades of colour, in accordance with the psychological impulses which suggested them. As will be noted, I am referring to noise, and not to sound, which is something quite different. It is well known that speaking tires one more than singing with a well-placed voice. Singers of fame sing all through an opera, and at the end feel quite fresh, or at least they show only the amount of tiredness that any other employment of energy, like walking, or speaking, or thinking, would produce. History tells, also, how singers of fame, who knew how to use their vocal instruments in perfection were able to sing into their old age. There were, for example, in Italy, Battistini, whose voice at seventy-three retained the freshness of youth, and Stracciari, who at sixty produced tones of wonderful beauty and resonance. In England, Santley sang well into his old age. Indeed, we have thousands of examples of singers whose vocal organs, even after the age of fifty, retained a remarkable freshness. It is, of course, only natural that one's vitality and energy should grow weaker with advancing years.

It is true that the vocal chords in some individuals vibrate more than those in others. One may consider the throat, or the larynx as any other instrument, like the piano, or the violin, or the flute, of a good make, or of a bad make. No matter how excellent the instrument may be it would be useless to a person who did not know its technique, and all the secrets of its use. So, as the piano has its technique, and one could not imagine a person performing correctly Beethoven, without the knowledge of that technique, the larynx has its own technique, and a very difficult one, because it is based for the most part on sensations. One cannot visualise a person singing at ease, and with all the effects that the vocal instrument can produce without proper instruction in all the secrets and the mechanism of that instrument. As I have said, from the beginning of the human race, the larynx has produced effects more or less musical according to the sentiments that man wished to express.

Little by little, as singing became an art, the masters of the past taught their pupils to produce sounds to correspond to their conception of what those sounds should be, thus giving to their teaching an empirical character. We have no positive proofs of the type and quality of sound produced by the singers of ancient days, and even the references to this or that type of sound, which appear in the old books on singing, are to-day a mystery. It was

not until the nineteenth century, when the laryngoscope was invented by the great Garcia, that one could ascertain something definite about the larynx and its movements. With the aid of the laryngoscope one could observe the movements of the two vocal chords in all the different ranges of the voice. One could see their contractions or relaxations according to the different pitches of the sounds and one could also observe the actions of the various muscles and cartilages belonging to the vocal apparatus. With powerful lights projected into the throat one could see even beyond the vocal chords. The discovery of the laryngoscope was the beginning of a new era for the technique of singing, and the teaching of singing became a real science. To-day, singing, although preserving all its original characteristics, has become the subject of scientific analysis. Without intending to give a lesson in physiology, it may be pointed out that it is well known that if the larynx be raised exaggeratedly the sounds produced are squeaky and tremulous, whereas if the larynx be lowered a little below its normal position of rest the sounds obtained are sweet. It is known also that if the lowering of the larynx be exaggerated rough and empty sounds are the outcome. It is, then, between the two exaggerations that the production of good musical sounds will be found.

The teaching of the formation of sound may be divided into three principal sections :

1. Production.
2. Resonance.
3. Registers.

1. Production—The beauty and health of the sounds depend on the following technical points: While breathing, the larynx is lowered just a little under the position of rest; then the attack is made by directing the breath against the vocal chords (*coup de glot*) decidedly but without effort, pronouncing a nice and warm *Ha*. In order to produce a pure and healthy tone, the sound must not be obtained by sliding (scooping), or with too much breath (breathy sound) or with an exaggerated attack (like coughing). The observance of these rules, together with a good diaphragmatic-lateral respiration, will produce a decided, healthy and pleasing sound. The respiration is composed of two movements: (a) The diaphragm is depressed in order to inhale the air down to the bottom of the lungs. (b) The diaphragm is drawn in, and the respiration is completed by enlarging the chest and expanding the ribs *at the sides*. During singing the diaphragm must remain in.

So the production of the sound is composed of three factors: (a) Diaphragm depressed for inhaling; (b) Diaphragm drawn in and the side ribs expanded in order to complete the inhalation; (c) Attack of the sound (*coup de glot*), which must be free and without effort, but decided, directing the breath against the *vocal chords*.

2. *Resonance*: This second element in the formation of sounds is of great importance. Every part of the voice, in fact, almost every sound, has its own point of resonance or reflection. Let us consider two components, the *sound* and the *larynx*. If, for instance, the sound is fixed on the teeth and the larynx is moved up and down, it will be found that the top notes will acquire a squeaky timbre and poor volume. On the other hand, if the larynx is kept steady in a slightly low position, the *sound* will move up and down in accordance with its pitch and will find different points of resonance. The second course will give the best results. Keep the larynx steady and direct the sounds upwards in regard to the pitch, and the maximum of resonance will be given to the sound. Imagine a semi-circle, that, starting from the lips and following the line of the face would end at the back of the head, and an idea will be formed of almost the exact position of every sound, from the lowest to the highest. It will be found that the top notes, in order to get the best resonance, must be directed high and back.

3. *Registers*: This third part is extremely important. We probably use the word *registers* improperly, and instead should speak of different sections of the voice. But the word *registers* has now become traditional, and is used to signify a group of notes produced by the same mechanism. These groups require to be blended by special exercises. Various elements combine to form the

different registers, such as the different openings of the ligaments, that stretch and become thinner in producing the top notes; the different colours of the voice, that help this or that register; and, most important, the muscles and cartilages called arytenoids, that help to cover the ligaments, and by so doing, shorten them so that they may produce the top notes with ease. The same result is produced on the violin by the use of the fingers, to shorten the strings. The arytenoids, with their sliding, as it were, on the vocal ligaments, give to the resounding components different forms in accordance with the sounds that they wish to produce, being broader for the low notes, and smaller and more taut for the top notes. These forward movements of the arytenoids, towards the front, occur in two places in proportion to the *pitch* of the sounds, (1) at about F in the first space of the treble clef, for all voices; (2) at about F on the fifth line of the same clef, for women, and particularly for sopranos. Naturally, these divisions of the voice into registers are not absolutely definite but are made up of groups of notes, which blend, as it were, to form a bridge. The difficulty, then, consists in blending all these different parts of the voice, or registers, in order to obtain an even quality of voice in all its range. The fact of forcing one register up into the next higher register causes the ruin of many voices. Therefore, this technical difficulty of properly blending the registers must be studied

accurately, and time and patience are required in order to master it perfectly. We often speak of tenors who open the top register, an imperfection which generally causes the loss of the voice. Again, we speak of *coloratura* sopranos who sing like hens, because they are unable to reproduce the *pichettati* or *martellati*, those birdlike sounds, in that particular register, which we call *small*. Of course, if success is desired, there must be added to the foregoing rules the study of respiration, the study of music, the study of elocution, etc., and the possession of a sense of good taste and interpretation.

At this point, I would like to give a word of advice to singers, and in particular to tenors. Do not make *false* *setto* a practice, as such a habit is disastrous to the health of the voice. Some tenors, particularly those who find the passage from the chest register to the head register difficult, when they get to F in the first space of the stave in the treble-clef sing from this note upwards in *false* *setto*, because they find this way easier, and also, in some ways, pleasing to the ear of the public. As is known, in *false* *setto*, the two ligaments do not vibrate. The *false* *setto* is produced by what are called the false chords, which are placed over the real chords. The false chords protrude one towards the other, just as the lips do when whistling, and at the pressure of the breath produce that sound which is called *false* *setto*. Persistent use of this system of singing

results in the loss of the natural top notes, as when the vocal chords arrive at the point when the singer begins to sing *falsetto* they relax, knowing that the remaining part of the work will be done by the false chords. The *falsetto* must remain a part of the technique to be used exceptionally here and there, in order to obtain some effects of *pianissimo* which satisfy the public, but must not be confused or compared with the *mezza voce*, which is another thing altogether, and which requires very long and accurate study.

I say in antithesis to Sir Milson Rees that *All who can, should sing!* Singing is the most direct expression of the intimate feelings of the human being, one of the most precious means of securing the spiritual education of the people, and the healthiest exercise of all the organs connected with respiration. Every healthy throat should be able to produce pleasing sounds. Personally, I have obtained astonishing results from scientific technical exercises, and exercises of the muscles and parts belonging to the singing apparatus. There are exercises for the lips, to make them elastic; for the palate, to make it move as one may wish; for the larynx, so that it may descend or rise in accordance with the type and timbre of sound that one desires to produce; there are movements for the tongue that will strengthen the epiglottis and the tonsils, and other exercises that will give the vocal apparatus a vigour and health beyond dreams.

In olden times, the English employed the system of raising the soft palate throughout the whole scale of sounds, and thus deprived the high notes of that brilliancy which makes them so fascinating. One of the characteristics of the Italian system is to lower the soft palate slightly for the top notes so that they may enter the highest portion of the pharynx. In so doing, the sounds receive more upper tones, giving the high notes that brilliant character which so distinguishes the Italian voices, particularly those of tenors.

So let the laryngologists look after the throats, which need their valuable assistance, whether they be singing throats or speaking throats; but do not ask them to pronounce judgment on the sounds. They should pursue their scientific researches to the maximum, so that they might be able to give the vocal chords even greater powers of resonance; but they should leave the task of finding the sounds to the Professors of Singing, who possess the qualifications for doing so, and who have studied for years on scientific principles how a sound should be produced, so that it might be beautiful; so that, with persevering study, man might, in singing, be able to express all the love which makes his spirit divine, and all the sorrow to which humanity is heir. The world needs music and songs to make it happy, and to make it less monotonous, less vulgar and less materialistic. Therefore, do not deprive mankind of these ennobling gifts. Let the

world be all one song; a song to fill the soul with purifying fire, as the sun floods the world with light, and diffuses joy and warmth to everything on earth.

I do not suggest that man can sing with the same facility as the nightingale, whose song is its only language; but man's vocal organs, if correctly used, can bring him a sense of joy, and afford others a pleasure, which perhaps no other instrument can give. Certainly, to master the science of singing well requires serious study. But so does every other accomplishment. Gigli could tell how long he had to study, in order that he might be able to produce those marvellous top notes, and that evenness of voice, which, combined with the appropriate resonant colours, gave him his great fame as a singer. We might ask Count McCormack how much time and care he gave to acquire those prodigious *mezze voci*, and that singing so perfect and apparently so simple, that made him the idol of the masses, and one of the most worthy and distinguished artists of our era.

Milan, 1937.

Gaetano Donizetti

THE home of opera is Italy, the land which gave it birth and which subsequently sent it forth, like rays of sunshine, to illuminate the skies of other countries, like Germany, France and England. Courts and nobles of many nations sought the early Italian artists—the musicians who introduced the first instrumental music, and the singers who brought Italian songs. In the beginning the Italian music was widely imitated, but later, with experience gained, composers of other nations invested their works with an individuality of their own, and with their own racial characteristics. With this development, a reaction set in, and a veritable war was waged against Italian music.

Two factors which were of great importance in the development of opera were the dispute between Gluck and Piccinni, in France, and, nearer our own times, the differences between the supporters and opponents of Wagner. These two episodes had the semblance of a conflict between the North and the South. Gluck, who was destined to win the aesthetic conflict with Piccinni, drew inspiration

from the forms of Greek Tragedy. Sorrow as expressed by him is tragic and profound, and his melodies, disdaining facile lines, reached sublime heights of emotion, whilst he gave to declamation a supreme importance with which it had not been invested previously. He endeavoured to express psychological situations through music, without detracting from the drama, unveiling its intimate sensations and using the music to convey the meaning of the actions.

On the other hand, Piccinni, a classic who devoted himself to the composition of sweet melodies, brilliant and pure, sought above all to emphasise the beauty of singing, and to uphold the plastic form of the melody. His music, of inspired beauty, and adorned with harmonies clear and logical, was not sacrificed for the sake of the drama.

Gluck succeeded in uniting the elements of tragedy with music, of which *Iphigénie en Tauride* provides a brilliant example. In France these principles found a worthy adherent in Mehul, whose opera *Giuseppe*, perfect in technique, abounds with simple and fascinating melodies, whilst in Germany, Mozart astonished the public and imparted new life to the lyrical drama by the power of the music with which he clothed the characters of his operas.

Two Italians who attained a place of honour in the operatic music of France were Cherubini, author of the classical *Medea*, and Spontini, who

composed *Vestale*, an opera with a Roman atmosphere and with pagan characteristics. Italy also produced Pergolesi, the worth of whose opera, *La Serva Padrona*, is enhanced by many tender and poetical melodies, and Paisiello, who dispensed pleasure with the sweet songs of *Nina Pazzo*.

Into this era of beautiful music was born the lovely figure of Gioachino Rossini, who appeared like a planet in the artistic firmament of 1792. He brought a soothing ambrosia to a tired and troubled world, his happy melodies heralding a new dawn for hearts tortured and minds distressed by the tragic events of the Napoleonic Wars. In the vivid melodies of *Italiana in Algerie*, and the brilliant and fascinating *Il Barbiere di Seviglia*, *The Swan of Pesaro*, as Rossini was called, depicted a happy Italy, full of laughter and basking in the beautiful colours of her floral nature. His principal characteristics were youthful freshness and a varied and smiling simplicity. And yet, when a sadder and deeper philosophy tortured his soul, he expressed himself in almost god-like sequences of sorrowful sounds and rhythms. In such a mood he produced *William Tell*, a poem of great nobility.

Rossini did much to correct a vulgar fashion that was prevalent amongst many of the celebrated singers of the day, who were in the habit of changing cadenzas and musical arrangements, in order to show off their voices. He fixed the cadenzas and florid passages in a way that deprived these people

of the possibility of thus destroying the creations of his genius.

Two of the great composers, Bellini and Donizetti, competed for the artistic heritage left by Rossini. Although Bellini followed the prevailing fashion by sprinkling his operas with *coloratura* and rapid scales, he nevertheless filled them with beautiful melodies, and gave them a poetical character that has never been excelled. Great genius that he was, he obtained these effects by the simplest means. His melodic forms fascinated men like Chopin; and Wagner found in the *finale* to *Norma* the inspiration for the death of Isolde. Bellini's opera, *La Sonnambula*, is full of enchanting beauty which bears the listeners to realms of delight.

Another product of this brilliant period of artistic evolution, so full of contrasts and developments, was Gaetano Donizetti. A prolific and learned genius, he contributed largely to the development of music, by the introduction of new forms. He, more than anyone else, marks a definite forward step, and provides a connecting link between Rossini and Verdi. Donizetti was born in 1797, in the City of Bergamo, about twenty miles from Milan, and he died there in 1848. At an early age, he revealed artistic tendencies, loving music, painting and literature. His father, Andrea, who held a very modest position in the *Monte di Pietà*, in Bergamo, originally intended his son for the law,

but later, yielding to the musical inclinations of young Gaetano, he placed him in the hands of the musician, Mayer, who had established himself in Bergamo, with the intention of founding a *conservatorio* there. Gaetano's rapid progress under the guidance of Mayer was phenomenal. When his voice was trained, he sang with exquisite taste, and, in addition, distinguished himself at the piano, violin and flute, while not neglecting that classical and general culture which was of such assistance to him when he decided to devote his talents to the theatre. After some time he went to the *Conservatorio* at Bologna, where he received tuition from Mattei for the purpose of perfecting himself in counterpoint and in the fugue.

On his return to Bergamo, Donizetti commenced a life of creative activity, composing quartettes for strings, and separate pieces of vocal music, until the production of his first theatrical venture, *Enrico di Borgogna*. His rise to fame began with this composition and was interrupted only by a few failures, until the presentation of his beautiful opera, *Elisir d'Amore*, established him as the champion of comic opera in Italy, and amply justified his acceptance by the public as a successor to Rossini. A prolific and versatile genius, Donizetti composed something like seventy operas and was equally successful both in tragic opera and in comic opera.

Donizetti was the chief representative of the

Italian school in the period immediately following Rossini, and whilst he did not obtain the polyphonic beauties of Wagner, he, nevertheless, achieved great power of expression through his exquisite gems of melody, which he set amidst beautiful harmonies and instrumentations. He also succeeded in uniting music with the drama in a perfect combination.

Although Donizetti lived in the famous period of the *Bel Canto*, when singers almost dominated the musical world and succeeded in forcing their ideas and styles on composers, he nevertheless was able to impart a surprising dramatic power to his music, without sacrificing its spirit of elegance. Pleasure loving, and of an exuberant nature, Donizetti made many friends, and his company was eagerly sought by the society of the period. His tragic illness and death whilst he was still full of further promise of great things, was probably provoked by the dissolute life he led.

Donizetti often wrote the most inspiring music in the course of his social activities or whilst participating in games. He composed that exquisite aria *Una Furtiva Lagrima* for his opera *Elisir d'Amore* whilst playing cards. "I always said that Rossini is a very lazy man," was his curt rejoinder to someone who had told him that *The Barber of Seville* was composed in a few weeks. His harmonies, considering the period in which they were written, are very advanced, and Donizetti

would certainly have become a powerful reformer had not death intervened to cut short the complete development of his genius, and the realization of his aspirations. His recitatives contain a perfect blending of poetry and music. This blending marks an important advance in Italian opera, and, later on, constituted one of the principal elements in Wagnerian opera. What a wide difference of styles is to be found between *Elisir d'Amore* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*, in which latter work the dramatic musical element reaches great heights of expression. Heart-rending is the effect of Lucia's sorrow and the mad scene, and cruel the destiny ordained for the composer of those tragic pages, whose wonderful mind was soon to be distorted in reality by this same madness which he had created with such powerful realism for the theatre.

In 1838, Donizetti went to Paris, where, in 1840, *La Figlia del Regimento*, which had been written on a French libretto, had a very successful presentation. During the Parisian period, he worked feverishly, producing some of his best compositions.

Of all the passions, love gives rise to the most conflicting sentiments, whether inspiring joy through reciprocation, or causing sorrow and hatred by denial. The theatre would not exist without these emotions, and Donizetti depicted them with dramatic musical colours and with great sweetness and tenderness, as in the compositions,

La Favorita, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Linda di Chamounix*, *Don Pasquale* and many others. *Don Pasquale*, a comic opera in three acts, has a certain analogy with Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, although Donizetti infuses his own personality into the work. It is well proportioned, spontaneous, elegant, with an exuberance of sentiment and wit which move and amuse in turn. It was written in 1843 for the Italian Theatre in Paris, when Donizetti was living in the French Capital. The libretto tells the story of Don Pasquale, an old and very rich bachelor, who disowns his nephew, Ernesto, because of his refusal to marry the lady whom his uncle had chosen for him. After this rupture, Don Pasquale decides to seek a wife for himself. Ernesto, secretly in love with a young widow called Norina, to whom he is bethrothed, now fears that he may be unable to give her the comforts of life, and decides to leave her in order to seek his fortune abroad. Dr. Malatesta, Ernesto's friend, devises a plan to reunite the lovers, and in accordance with it he presents Norina to Don Pasquale, as his niece fresh from a convent school. The old bachelor falls in love with her and proposes marriage, a step which is hastened by Dr. Malatesta, who brings along a fake notary, to perform the ceremony. At this point, Ernesto arrives at the house of Don Pasquale, and, seeing Norina there, he despairs, until drawn aside by Dr. Malatesta, who explains the intrigue to him. As soon as the mock ceremony has been gone

through, Norina casts aside her assumed simplicity, and becomes a veritable shrew. She proclaims that Don Pasquale's mode of life is antiquated, and wishes to make revolutionary changes. She wants new furniture, new servants, new horses, and even decides to go to the theatre unchaperoned, ordering the old husband to bed. Don Pasquale, naturally amazed at this sudden change in his loved one, protests violently but vainly, and is left stupified when Norina ends the matter by boxing his ears, as a prelude to going out gaily. Prior to leaving the house, Norina deliberately drops a note received from an imaginary lover, who asks her to meet him in Don Pasquale's garden, that night. The note, of course, is found by Don Pasquale, who solicits the help of Dr. Malatesta, whom he believes to be his friend, to help him surprise the lovers. They reach the garden barely in time to see a strange man disappear in the distance. The man is Ernesto, in disguise. Don Pasquale demands the lover's name from Norina, and there follows a terrible quarrel which Dr. Malatesta succeeds in calming. Don Pasquale then offers to annul his marriage with Norina, and follows up a proposal that his nephew, Ernesto, shall be married to her, by inviting them to live in his home. Norina pretends to be unwilling but Don Pasquale insists. At this point, Dr. Malatesta discloses the whole conspiracy, and Don Pasquale, anxious to be free of the awkward situation and to escape ridicule, has his marriage

annulled and gives his blessing to the young couple. The comedy is thus brought to a happy conclusion.

In *Don Pasquale* there is a wealth of beautiful melodies, commencing with the overture and continuing in fascinating sequence with the duet between Don Pasquale and Dr. Malatesta, Dr. Malatesta's song, Norina's scene and aria, the sentimentally rich songs of Ernesto, the charming choruses of the servants, the quartet, the fascinating serenade for tenor and chorus in the garden scene, and the exquisite duet between Norina and Ernesto. All the vivacity and caustic satire of Rossini's Figaro are evinced by Dr. Malatesta, the wit of whose escapades wins a sympathy that covers his misdeeds. The smiles of spring, the lights and colours of the fresh morning breeze, the singing of nightingales are all represented in exquisite synthesis in the person of Norina, who, together with Ernesto, succeeds in obtaining the triumph of exuberant youth over decrepit and petulant old age, personified by the pretentious Don Pasquale. The inviolability of nature's laws is aptly portrayed in this opera, which represents the triumph of love in a poem of youth.

After some journeys to Vienna and Switzerland in 1845, undertaken to regain his health, Donizetti's condition disimproved considerably, and he became subject to frequent fainting fits, showing obvious signs of the terrible disease which was soon



GAETANO DONIZETTI

REPRODUCTION OF A LITHOGRAPH PORTRAIT
BY V. ROSCIONI OF VINCENZIO

GAETANO DONIZETTI

to darken his creative mind. When he returned to Bergamo, hopes of his complete recovery were entertained following some signs of slight improvement. It was not long, however, before he relapsed into that silent melancholy which was eventually to prove fatal.

This brilliant mind, creator of so many sublime melodies, and source of so many noble, artistic conceptions, became shrouded in darkness, until death in 1848 brought a merciful release. With Donizetti's death disappeared, for a time, the hopes of an Italian musical renaissance, but the fruits of his genius which he bequeathed to the world will ever be an inspiration to future generations.

Dublin, 1939.

Giuseppe Verdi

GIUSEPPE Verdi was born on 10th October, 1813, in the little town of Roncole, situated about three miles from Busseto in central Italy. His parents kept a small inn, combined with a kind of village shop. Nothing that is known of his childhood would suggest that he was a musical prodigy. He was considered a shy boy, with an inclination to solitude which persisted even in his maturity. Contemporary opinion was that he was rugged and misanthropic.

Verdi's musical education really began when he entered into the business house of Antonio Barezzi, a merchant of Busseto and a competent musician. While there, he studied under Ferdinando Provesi, *Maestro di Cappella* of the cathedral in Busseto, and conductor of the municipal orchestra, for which Verdi later wrote marches and other instrumental pieces. After a short time he was appointed organist in Roncole, where he went every Sunday for the religious services. There, under the guidance of Provesi, his progress was so satisfactory that he was frequently called upon to deputise for the Maestro, not alone at the cathedral

TOWARDS MUSIC

organ in Busseto, but also as conductor of the municipal orchestra.

Verdi's first symphony was written when he was fifteen years of age, and was performed in 1828. In 1832 he went to Milan to complete his studies, a step which was made possible by the generosity of Barezzi, who, having the consent of Giuseppe's parents, and appreciating his uncommon musical tendencies, undertook the entire responsibility for his training. Verdi later married the daughter of Signor Barezzi, and two children were born of the union. A great shadow darkened his life when his wife and children were carried off after less than a week's illness.

I would like to clarify a wrong impression which persists regarding Verdi's completion of his studies in Milan. It has frequently been asserted that he was refused admission to the *Conservatorio*, the inference being that the Board of Examiners did not appreciate that inside his simple, almost countrified exterior was hidden a genius who was destined to send forth musical flowers of a thousand fascinating colours, and who, despite many bitter struggles and disappointments, would become one of the great musical symbols of the Italian people. There are documents in the *Conservatorio* which show that Verdi never tried to enter as a composer, but as a pianist. As such he was not accepted. It is true that he resented the action of the authorities, but, with the passing of years, this disappointment

GIUSEPPE VERDI

was forgotten and he permitted his name to be given to the *Conservatorio*.

Verdi died on 27th January, 1901, in the Hotel Milan, which was then the property of Maestro Giordano, composer of *Andrea Chenier*. Even to this day his apartments in the hotel remain exactly as they were at the time of his death. As a boy I saw his remains being borne to the *Cimitero Monumentale*, where Toscanini directed the orchestra of *La Scala* and a chorus of 3,000 voices, in a moving performance of *Va pensiero sull' ali dorate*, the famous chorus from Verdi's Opera, *Nabucodonosor*, which, written in 1842, had placed him in the front rank of living Italian composers. Later, his remains were removed to *La Casa di Riposo*, the House of Rest, for the foundation of which he had bequeathed fifteen million lire. This institution was established in order to provide aged artists with a comfortable home in sympathetic surroundings during their declining years. Grandi's beautiful monument to Verdi stands in the square in front of the House.

Notwithstanding a rough exterior, Verdi was at heart full of sentiment. He completed that chain of rich musical operatic compositions of the Italian style which was begun by Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti. Living in one of the greatest periods of Italian political history, the *Risorgimento*, which brought to a close the Austrian domination in Italy, many of his operas possessed definite political

characteristics, and his stirring songs and choruses filled the Italian people with patriotic fervour. Although his life was marred by much sorrow, he enjoyed many satisfactions and triumphs. Even his name in itself brought renown by virtue of the fact that its letters comprised the initials of the phrase, "Vittorio Emanuele Re D'Italia," which was forbidden during the Austrian domination but was implied by simply uttering the word VERDI!

Verdi possessed genuine qualities of genius and his gradual development may be noted from the simple forms of *Conte di San Bonifacio*, through the more mature *Rigoletto*, *Trovatore* and *Traviata*, to the great heights reached in *Aida*. These operas are full of humanity, and for that reason they still retain a surprising freshness. With *Othello* and *Falstaff*, Verdi soared to wondrous heights. In *Othello* he achieved further advances in musical expression and his harmonisations were much superior to those in any of his preceding works. *Falstaff*, his first real success in comic opera, proved his versatility. There was already evidence of his tendency towards comic opera in *Forza del Destino*, although one of the characters in it, Fra Melitone, because of its distortions and exaggerations in caricature, is more a grotesque figure than a comic one. On the other hand, *Falstaff* is a real comedy, full of sparkling wit. In this work one may sense the Wagnerian influence which, however, never touched the

creative soul of Verdi, but is seen rather in its effect on his instrumentation. As a creative genius, Verdi remained essentially Italian to the end. The final fugue in *Falstaff* shows the immense depth of his musical knowledge. He composed it in the year 1893, when he was eighty years of age. From this one may infer something of the enormous energy of the great maestro who has left such an indelible mark on the history of music. *Falstaff*, which touched the highest pinnacle reached by Verdi in the art of song, constituted the luminous zenith of a career brimful of incident, and with it the creative work of the "Swan of Busseto," as he was called, came to a close. Verdi's compositions remain a monument to a great genius who succeeded in translating into music the reactions of the soul to human passions, and in filling the world with sublime melodies which will fascinate mankind for centuries to come. In common with many other celebrated composers, he was an idealist, and burned with feverish enthusiasm. He realised his ideal through the majestic manner in which he represented and immortalised his beloved Italy.

One may ask what influence did Verdi exercise on the musicians who followed him? Was he the founder of a new operatic school? To what category belonged that mind which evolved those exquisite melodies that have brought joy and tears to countless multitudes? The qualities of Verdi's music were the fruits of a great sincerity, and of a soul capable

of deep analysis of human passions. But although Verdi was a wonderful genius, he cannot, in my opinion, be considered a genius of synthesis like, for instance, Rossini; or a creative genius like Wagner, who commenced a new musical era by distinctively breaking away from the forms of music which existed before his time. Verdi created no new forms. There was nothing in his musical expressions which had not already been unveiled, and with better technique, by Rossini, Bellini and, particularly, by Donizetti who, in his operas, *La Favorita* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*, gave promise of a revival in Italian music, because of his dramatic intensity, the beauty of his melodies and the daring forms of his harmonisations. Accordingly, Verdi may be regarded rather as a productive genius, and in this respect he was amazingly prolific.

A tendency frequently noted in Verdi's works was the importance which he attached to their immediate effects on the public, instead of seeking a more refined technique for the expression of his musical thoughts. This tendency is often too much in evidence, and many of his effects are obtained by the use of common and almost vulgar means. The popularity of his works, however, testifies eloquently that his appeal to the spirit of the public met with complete success. Perhaps this tendency to a facile mode of composition, founded on melodies which could easily be remembered, may



G. Verdi

GIUSEPPE VERDI

have distracted him from enlarging his knowledge of the technique necessary for more profound compositions. It was only towards the close of his life that Verdi began to search for something deeper. The fugue in *Falstaff* provides an example of his late desire for a technical refinement which, however, he sought too late to enable him to achieve a new orientation. If, when he finished *Falstaff*, Verdi still had another long period of life before him, his exceptional physical and intellectual qualities would probably have revealed new and even greater talents and might have imbued further productions with new life, both from the technical and imaginative points of view. As we know him, however, he remains a massive figure against a background of the history of Italian music.

The great composers of different nationalities are often compared by musicians and critics, and Wagner and Verdi, in particular, are thus frequently discussed. For some, Wagner is the greater; others favour Verdi. I believe that such comparisons are both difficult and risky to make. The arts represent the reactions of the different nations to all that is beautiful, while great geniuses portray in synthesis the aspirations, the sensibilities, the philosophical and religious conceptions, the traditions, and the climatic and social characteristics of the nations to which they belong. Accordingly, it would not be fair to judge Verdi on the same basis as Wagner. Both attained a

greatness which extended beyond the confines and atmosphere of the lands of their birth, and in which they passed their lives. The question of their universal importance should be examined, if one is to determine who possessed the greater qualities unrelated to his own country. Analysis to fix the extent of their universality would require deep and wide study, beyond the limitations of this article. Certainly Verdi succeeded in colouring his works with human elements which rendered them universally acceptable. They have been translated into many languages, and are still being successfully produced in the principal countries of the world.

This brief study of Verdi and his works would be incomplete without referring to the *Requiem Mass* which he wrote to commemorate the death of the great Italian writer, Alessandro Manzoni. This composition gave rise to animated discussion by the critics, whose judgments were varied and conflicting. Some held that the work lacked importance from the religious view-point; some considered its lines too theatrical, whilst others praised its melodic richness and the austerity of its conception. It is difficult to dogmatize whether there exists one definite type of music with which we can express and sing our adoration of God. And whose music should be chosen? Is the perfect model of the religious style to be found in that of Palestrina, Mozart, Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Pergolesi, Handel's oratorios, or in that of Abate Perosi, of

our own times. If we consider that Verdi was essentially a composer of operatic music and that, consequently, it was difficult for him to break away completely from that form which constituted the essence of his intellectual activity, we will realise how nobly, in composing his *Requiem*, he overcame this difficulty.

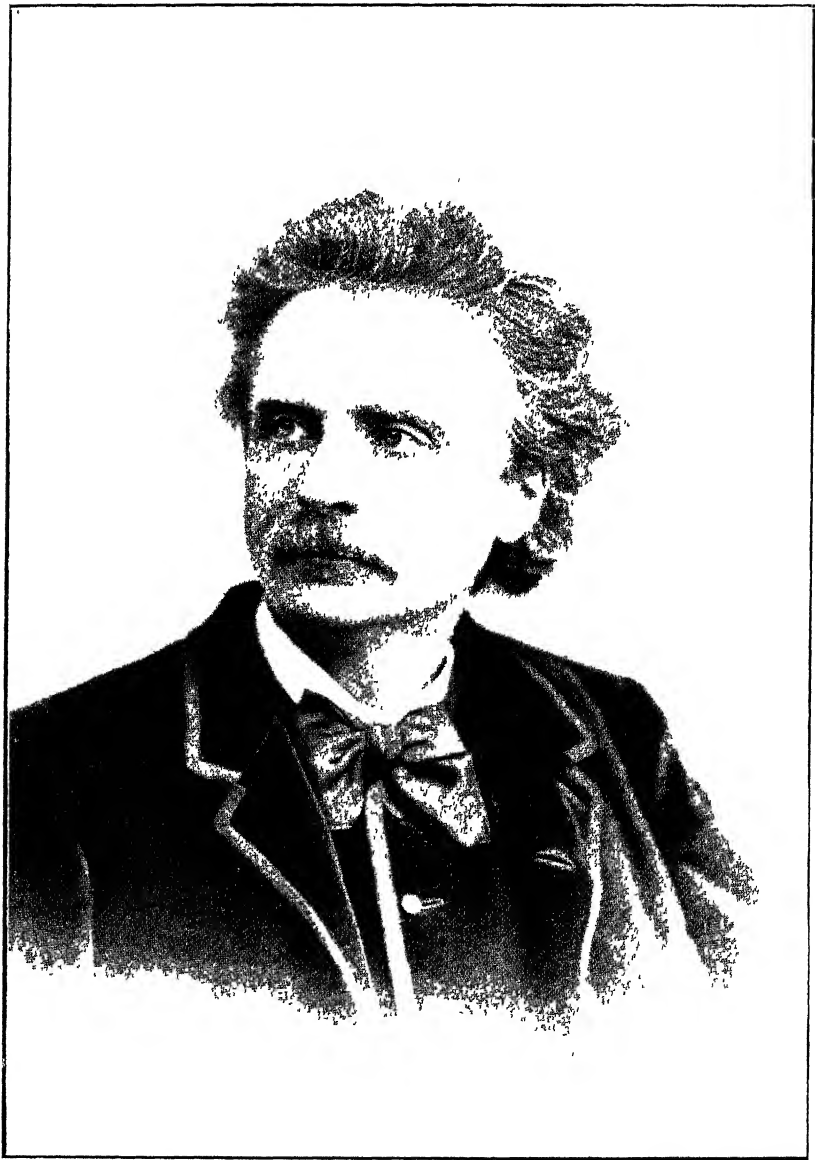
Dublin, 1943.

Edward Hagerup Grieg

EDWARD Hagerup Grieg was born on June 15th, 1843, in Bergen, where his father, Alexander Grieg, was English Consul. The Grieg family was of Scottish origin, the composer's grandfather having emigrated after Culloden. His mother, Gesine Hagerup, belonged to a pure Norwegian family, and it is from her that Grieg appears to have derived his musical talent. She gave him his first lessons on the pianoforte when he was six. At nine, Grieg presented his first composition, *Variations On a German Melody*, to his teacher, who did not, however, encourage him to persevere in this line.

While travelling with his father in 1858 Grieg had the opportunity of admiring the beautiful Norwegian countryside, and he determined to glorify it in music. In the Autumn of that year he entered the Leipzig *Conservatorio*, and studied under Moschelss and Reineke, until 1860, when a pulmonary illness, which was to weaken him for life, forced him to return to Norway. He later resumed his interrupted studies at Leipzig, where he took his degrees in 1862. From Leipzig he went,

in 1863, to Copenhagen, where he studied with Gade and Emil Hartman. After some time he became a pupil of Richard Nordraak, of whom he says: "For the first time I learned through him to know the Northern folk-tunes and my own nature. We made a pact to combat the Gade-Mendelssohn mixture of Scandinavianism and boldly entered upon the new path along which the Northern school at present pursues its course." Something akin to a crusade in favour of Norwegian national music resulted, and in the winter of 1864-1865 Grieg founded the Copenhagen Concert Society *Euterpe* for the production of the works of young Norwegian composers. Grieg settled in Christiania in the autumn of 1866, and in 1868 he composed for pianoforte and orchestra his famous concerto in A minor, in the first performance of which he himself, a gifted pianist endowed with rare qualities of feeling and sentiment, took part. He subsequently travelled a great deal, giving recitals of his own music in France, England, Germany and Italy. During the winter of 1869-1870 he was in Rome, where he met Liszt, who played his piano concerto at sight from the manuscript and gave it his enthusiastic approval. Grieg was made a member of the Royal Musical Academy of Sweden in 1872, and in 1874 he was granted an annual stipend of 1,600 kronen by the Norwegian Storting. In 1888 he visited London, where he played his pianoforte concerto and conducted his



EDWARD GRIEG

two melodies for strings at a philharmonic concert, and he was in England again in 1891, 1894 and 1896. He died at Bergen on September 4th, 1907.

Grieg's piano concerto is one of the most beautiful examples of poetry in musical form and, tinged with popular themes and Norwegian dances, it paints in fascinating colours the romantic and picturesque personality of its composer. Patriotic and human, Grieg is essentially national in sentiment, and his compatriots accept his works as sincere and lovely reflections of the spirit of the North. And yet, though his music sings poetically of Nordic nostalgia, and represents the very soul of Norway, it is also rich in universal elements which attract and fascinate other nations.

There have been many discussions and much has been written concerning *local colour* in certain types of music, and it has even been said that this idea is more fantastic than real. But of this we may be certain, that anyone acquainted with Scandinavian culture cannot fail to recognise the Nordic characteristics in the music of Grieg. It is full of poetry and the love of fatherland which prevails in the Northern countries. In his famous *Dance of the Dwarfs* Grieg portrays all the grotesque movements of those imaginary figures which exist in the minds of the people, whose legends and traditions are readily recalled by his mysterious melodies. Those who appreciate his exquisite lyrical pieces for

pianoforte, or his songs, such as *I Love Thee* and *Spring*, cannot overlook the wonderful colouring and indelible qualities of his works, or the melancholic poetry with which they abound.

One might expect to find the source of inspiration of Grieg's music in the wealth of material provided by the magnificent scenery of his country, its culture and popular movements. Yet, withal, it is his own powerful personality which translates his every emotion into divine music. It is the great figure of Grieg, the musician, which pervades his works, and predominates from the simple lieder to *Peer Gynt*; from the sonata in F for violin and piano to the beautiful concerto for piano and orchestra.

Grieg's poetical mode of using harmonies, and the manner in which he infuses his melodies with a lyricism of sincerity and freshness, make of him a fascinating romantic. Whenever some Grieg pieces are mingled with the works of other composers, in a musical programme, their singular originality and freshness stand out like a harmonious bas-relief of his personality. Whether it be *Butterflies*, *The Dance of Anitra*, *The Wedding March*, *The Dance of The Dwarfs*, *Nocturne*, or any of the other exquisite products of his genius, his music will always reveal the beauty of the poetry that was in him, and his search for lofty and artistic ideals.

Dublin, 1943.

Charles Villiers Stanford

THE arts provide a means by which expression may be given to the ethnic, historical, political and cultural characteristics of the nations. That climate exercises a deep influence on the peoples of the earth and on their artistic endeavours has been affirmed by philosophers of widely separated periods. To Hippocrates, born on the Island of Cos in 460 B.C., is attributed a work on epilepsy, called *The Sacred Disease*, in which it is written that this malady arises, like others, "from things which enter and quit the body, such as cold, the sun, and the winds." In the middle eighteenth century, Montesquieu wrote many volumes on manners and customs, and their dependence on climatic conditions. Applying this philosophy to art, it will readily be noted that in the South music reflects the melodic lightness of an atmosphere full of sunshine, whilst in the North it invokes light with a sense of nostalgia, lamenting, in a nebulous manner, the melancholic persistence of rain.

It has also been asserted that, amongst the different peoples, variations in the conception of life arise, on the one hand, from conditions of

culture and liberty, which inspire joy and happiness, or, on the other hand, from a state of thralldom, which inflicts a torturous and deeply-rooted misery. In subjected nations, the oppressed people have ever found in their rebellious souls a reaction which, like a blazing flame of inspiration, has urged them to sing of their hopes, and of their struggles for liberty. In marked contrast, the free races have always poured torrents of enthusiasm into their arts, exulting in the greatness of their lands and in the deeds of their heroes.

In Ireland centuries of oppression persecuted the soul of the people, the reaction in whose music is made up of strangely opposite factors, responsible on the one hand, for the composition of songs full of poetic melancholy, a characteristic which, nevertheless, has never succeeded in eliminating that sense of adaptation, so peculiar to the Irish. In contrast to the sadness which permeates these songs, there is no evidence of a meek and tearful acceptance of destiny in the scintillating wit and humour of the people, in the lively movement and rhythm of the popular songs, or in the traditional dances so remarkable for their infinite variety of patterns and steps, synchronised by such wonderful timing with the quick and persistent themes. The performance of the dances demands a body rigid, yet abandoned to a multitude of leg and foot movements, which the competent performer translates into a poetic language, in

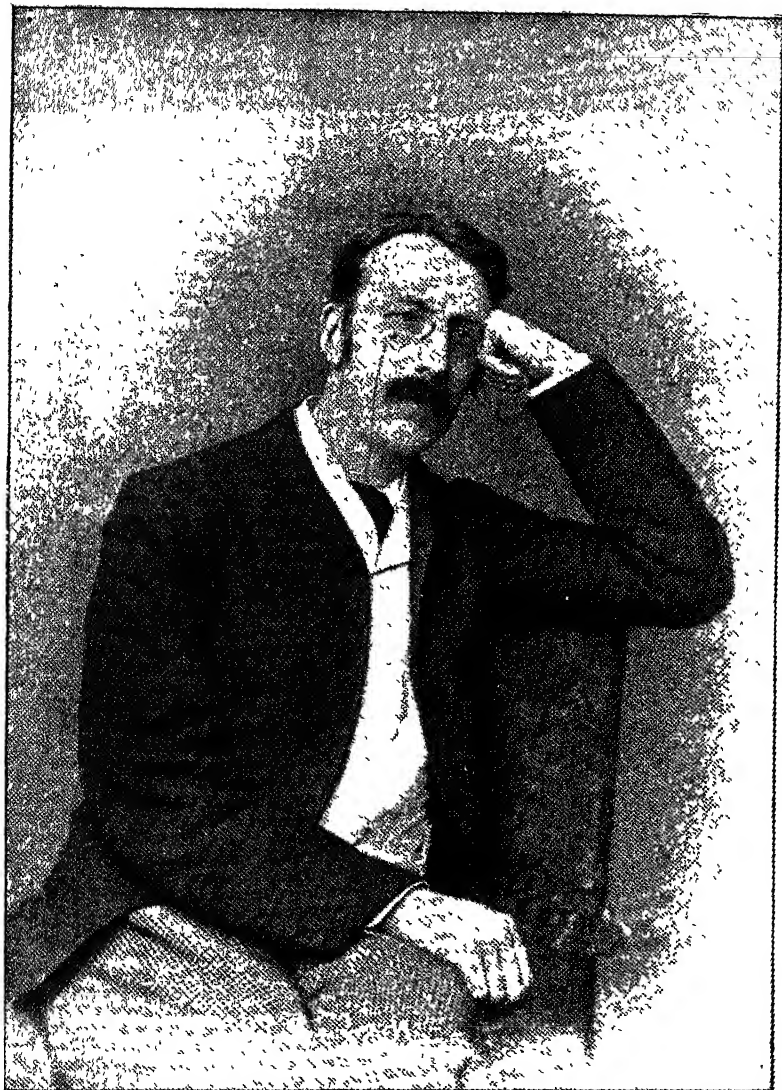
which every step is a verse and every skip an expression of beauty. The songs and dances, reflective of laughter and tears, remained the simple creations of obscure musicians or of unremembered singers toiling in the green fields, until individual talent gave them form and the richness of harmony.

Amongst Irish musicians were some who not only gave form and harmonic life to that music which, in Ireland, constitutes a very valuable patrimony, but who also composed new music of greater character, widening the circle of their creations to embrace classical forms of universal interest, whilst retaining original national characteristics. Foremost amongst the composers who brought renown to Ireland was Charles Villiers Stanford, born in Herbert Street, Dublin, in the year 1852. His father, a prominent figure in the legal profession, was a great lover of music, being a good bass-singer who took part in many important theatrical productions. His mother was an excellent pianist, and it was she who gave him his first lessons in the piano, an instrument in which he quickly perfected himself. Studying composition under the guidance of Sir Robert Stewart, he had all the characteristics of the *enfant prodige*, composing hymns at the tender age of seven or eight years. There were clear indications of his musical tendencies in a march which he composed in 1859, and which was included in a pantomime produced in the Theatre Royal, Dublin.

In London, under the tutorage of Ernst Pauer, Stanford perfected himself in the piano and in the organ, and considerably increased his musical knowledge, his studies being supported by an excellent literary education, which proved a great asset when he began to compose vocal music. In this, an harmonic fusion between the words and the music is easily perceptible. In 1870, he won a scholarship at Queen's College, Cambridge, whence he moved to Trinity College in 1873, and became College organist, a post he held till 1892.

A new life opened for Stanford with his entry to Cambridge. He became a Master of Arts, and was nominated conductor of the University Musical Society, an appointment which afforded him great opportunities. From 1874 to 1877, he went to Germany every summer, to study counterpoint with the eminent German professors, Reinecke and Kiel. He went first to Leipzig, and subsequently to Berlin, in which city he enlarged his circle of acquaintances and widened his culture. The young musician, having already spread his wings, felt the poetic urge to soar to vaster skies, attracted by the fascination of the great heights that approach the spiritual spaces, where only the great can stand with impunity, and from which stage onwards, the way is indicated by the overwhelming light of success and by the infinite light of glory.

Stanford's first important work was inspired by Tennyson's *Queen Mary*, his incidental music to



CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD

which was played at the Lyceum Theatre, London, in 1876. Later in the same year his symphony in B flat was performed at the Alexandra Palace. He had then definitely decided to establish himself in England, and worked very hard at his compositions. In 1881, his first opera, *The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan*, was given at Hanover, and was followed by *Savonarola*, at Hamburg and Covent Garden, in 1884, and *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, at Covent Garden, in the same year. A long interval separates these from his later operas, *Shemus O'Brien*, which was first produced at the *Opera Comique*, in 1896, and *Much Ado About Nothing*, played at Covent Garden, in 1901, and performed on the continent with greater success than any similar work by a British composer. His last opera, *The Travelling Companion*, was posthumously produced in 1926. *Shemus O'Brien*, the least pretentious of his operatic works, is, perhaps his best composition for the theatre, and remains as clear proof of his marked tendency towards this fascinating form of musical expression. In it melody is abundant, attractive and very delicate, forming a clever frame without overstepping the limits of an acceptable and pleasing modernity. Of *Savonarola*, the German critic Riccius wrote: "As regards intrinsic musical importance, fertility of imagination, clever and at the same time solid elaboration, dramatic instinct

as well as honesty and seriousness of artistic purpose, this work far surpasses all other operatic novelties produced here during the past few years; and yet we have witnessed a good many during that period, and amongst them some of undoubted merit and by reputed composers."

Stanford was appointed professor of composition at the Royal College of Music in 1883, and conductor of the Bach choir in 1885. After the death of Sir George MacFadden, in 1887, he was nominated Professor of Music in Cambridge University, and founded the Cambridge University Symphony Concerts Society, a movement which brought to light many works of universal merit. It was during this period that he received the honorary title of *Doctor of Music*. He was appointed conductor of the Leeds Philharmonic Society, in 1897, and of the Leeds Festival from 1901 onwards. Helen Henschel, daughter of George Henschel, the noted singer and conductor, in her work, *When Soft Voices Die*, says of Stanford (p. 110): "Dr. Villiers Stanford, professor of composition at the College, can rightly be called the spiritual father of practically all our best contemporary English composers. In considering the brilliance of his pupils, one is apt to forget what lovely music he wrote himself."

Stanford's instrumental works include six symphonies, many chamber compositions, among them two string quartets; besides numerous songs,

part-songs, madrigals and incidental music. *The Three Holy Children* and *Eden* were two early oratorios, which were followed by *The Elegiac Symphony*, in 1883. Then came an Irish symphony, a symphony in F, and many choral works. His compositions are widely known, and while it would be quite impossible to list them all in this brief survey, one cannot omit to mention a sonata in A for piano and cello, another in D for piano and violin, a quintet in D Minor for pianofortes, the *Suite for Violin and Orchestra*, dating from 1889, *The Elegiac Ode*, a concerto for piano and orchestra, and miscellaneous sacred music of noble character.

Stanford is much appreciated in these Islands by virtue of his vocal compositions and his adaptations of Irish folk songs. As a composer, he seems to convey the impression of searching, with anxious eyes, the vast realms of the future, as though he hoped to find beyond the darkness a way of salvation, or a possible defensive element against the reactions of the unknown ways he wished to walk. It seems as though he is recalled to known paths by the voice of his friend Brahms, whose precepts he followed to some extent, and whose classical forms besought him not to betray a life-long and dear friendship. And so, troubled by the resultant dilemma, his soul swayed between formal traditions and an imaginative desire to plunge into a fascinating modernism, thereby creating a mental struggle which, however, left untouched his sense of

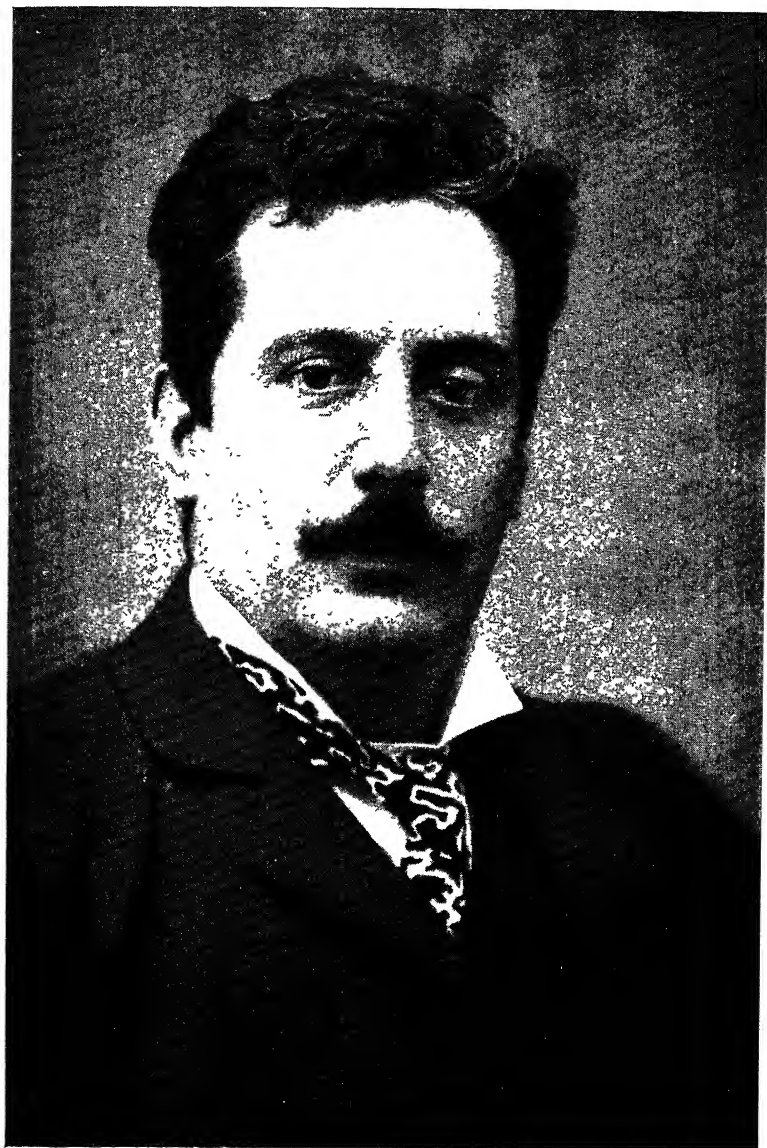
devotion and respect for the aesthetic. Consequently, his melodies, always clear and pleasant, are solidly harmonised and often flavoured with a modernism which affords a presentiment of the discovery of new bodies in the musical firmament of the northern countries. Songs full of wit, like *Scared*, from the collection *A Fire of Turf*, or touched with healthy modernity, as in *City Clocks*, will forever remain examples of his genius. Stanford's attainments were officially recognised when he was knighted in 1902, twenty-two years before his death in London.

Of his many songs, particular mention must be made of *An Irish Idyl*, *Twelve Songs on Heine's Poetry*, *The Cavalier Songs*, composed to Browning's words, and eight songs on poetry written by Eliot. To this list must be added his adaptations and harmonisations of folk songs, *Irish Songs*, *Songs of Erin*, and his scholarly settings of Moore's *Irish Melodies*, a splendid edition in which the harmonies are in faithful and delicate accord with the beauty of the songs.

I have often thought that if chance had caused Stanford, after his studies and travels abroad, to establish himself in Dublin instead of London, he would certainly have helped to form a school of composition here which would have had far reaching effects and would have placed Irish music on a high plane. For such a mission, he possessed all the necessary qualities. He had real musical culture,

supported by an imaginative mind and a most progressive spirit, crowned with good taste and a very high sense of respect for his art. To these qualifications he added an excellent literary background, and courteous manners, attributes that made him a fascinating public figure. But destiny ordained otherwise, and Stanford's influence on music in Ireland had to come from outside the country, instead of from within. Nevertheless, the work of this great Irishman, who gave new scope to the language of the harp and who has enriched the pages of Irish musical history by the beauty of his compositions, will continue to provide inspiration and spiritual guidance for the young musicians of this country for countless generations.

Dublin, Summer, 1945.



GIACCOMO PUCCINI

Giacomo Puccini

DURING the glorious era of Italian music crowned by the majestic figure of Verdi, there arose a group of young musicians of great promise, like the versatile genius, Mascagni, so successful in the creation of beautiful melodies symbolic of the soul of Italy; melodies that will forever fascinate like the waves of the receding tide flowing towards a horizon of infinity. To that period also belonged Leoncavallo, who endowed his *Pagliacci* with so much dramatic power; and Ponchielli with *La Gioconda*, and Franchetti, Cilea, Giordano and Catalani, amongst others whose works are rich in musical poetry and in the purity of their conception. The fertility of the period which produced so much of what is best in Italian music may be appreciated the more when it is realised that these talented young composers were overshadowed by yet another brilliant contemporary, Giacomo Puccini, who not only brought honour and fame to his native land with those melodies whose crystalline beauty blended so well with their human elements, but who also gave a new impulse to Italian musical

drama by his indisputable sense of the theatre and by his exquisite good taste.

Puccini's profound understanding of theatrical situations ever guided him in the selection of libretti for his music, and it was this quality that made it possible for him to convey so clearly the complete fusion of his music with the situations of the drama. This extraordinary intuition, so much in evidence in his operas, makes it impossible to conceive them played with music other than his, just as one could not imagine a Tristan and Isolde linked to music other than that with which Wagner immortalised them. The characters in Puccini's operas are musically alive and his melodies delightfully portray the sentiments which they express, replacing, as it were, the artificial mask of the stage with a reality that radiates sorrow, joy, love and all the passions that move humanity. These effects Puccini achieved with a musical power of incomparable scope and flexibility, unveiling within his remarkable genius, qualities mild and delicate, yet unmistakably triumphant. Mimi's pain and sorrow are the lot of her sisters in a world of tears, just as the desperation of Butterfly torments the hearts of all betrayed in love, and as the cunning of Schicchi lives in rascals who make use of foolish people in order to attain their own mischievous ends. The baseness or the nobility which Puccini depicted and coloured with his musical soul, live in universal shadows or smile in the light of the sun.

Manifest in all his melodies and contributing largely to their irresistible and lasting appeal is the influence of that theatrical intuition ever apparent in the creation of his characters.

Born into a musical atmosphere, in the little Tuscan township of Lucca, on December 22nd, 1858, Puccini, at an early age, strove to acquire a rudimentary musical education in the place of his birth, and it was not until he had reached his twenty-second year that, encouraged by his family and by some help from Queen Margherita, he made the great decision to go to Milan. In this centre of Italian culture, wherein the standard of music was the highest, Puccini became a pupil at the *Conservatorio* and studied composition with Ponchielli and Catalani. Ponchielli was very kind to him, even offering him the hospitality of his house when he was very poor during his early years in Milan. One day Mascagni told me of that period when he, Leoncavallo and Puccini lived in a very simple lodging house, sharing a room which served as studio, dining-room and dormitory. It was a dining-room without the knowledge or good-will of the landlady, who had forbidden them to cook in it, so that as meal time approached, it was Puccini's task to beat the eggs and turn them into the pan, already heated over the fire, in anticipation of the preparation of the coveted omelet which comprised their principal meal. Whilst this was going on, Mascagni would sit at the piano and improvise, introducing

an abundance of chords and arpeggios which he would play with abandon and fortissimo, to drown the splutterings peculiar to eggs bubbling on a hot frying-pan. "A life of poverty," said Mascagni, "but it was full of poetry and promise." The promises were later realised by these three champions of Italian music.

It was in the house of Ponchielli that Puccini was introduced to the poet, Ferdinando Fontana, who wrote the libretto for his first music for the theatre. This was an opera in one act called *Le Villy*, and the success which it attained marked Puccini's first step on the road to fame. Fontana followed with another libretto, *Edgar*, the style and form of which were too conventional, and, despite some passages of great musical value, it was not a success. However, these early theatrical experiments helped to develop that sense of the theatre, already much in evidence in Puccini's works, and which was destined later to play such an important part in his career, enabling him to select successfully subjects which were also ideally suited to his musical temperament.

Enamoured with the Abbé Prevost's story of *Manon*, Puccini decided to set it to music, and on this libretto he worked intensively, a little in Lucca, in Milan, in Switzerland and at Torre del Lago. The Opera was completed in 1893, and was a tremendous success when produced in Turin. The beauty of its melodies and the passion predominating

throughout the whole score, clearly pointed towards Puccini's brilliant future.

It is well known that Puccini's librettists had great difficulty in satisfying his sense of the theatre and that he constantly suggested changes in their work. The poets Illica and Giacosa in particular, who wrote the libretti for *La Bohème*, *Madame Butterfly* and *Tosca* endured tortures before they fulfilled completely the intellectual desires of the great Maestro. Once, a complete break between the poets and Puccini was only averted by the intervention of Giulio Ricordi, who published all his works. For example, they had to rewrite thrice the libretto for *La Bohème*, which was produced on February 1st, 1896.

About that time, Puccini had in mind to write a comic opera, and in a letter to Ricordi he declared: "Let us make this scorning public laugh, and it will be grateful." Although he asked Tristan Bernard to write a libretto on Daudet's book, *Tartarin de Tarascon*, there was no immediate development, and the comic opera did not appear until the advent of the masterly *Gianni Schicchi*, which he composed on the libretto written for him by Forzano.

La Bohème was composed at Torre del Lago, and the Maestro, relating in his letters of the deep emotions stirred within him by the music describing Mimi's anguish, told how his hands trembled on the keys of the piano, and of the warm tears that damped his cheeks when he wrote the music to the

death scene of the tragic little seamstress. Such was the intense participation of the Maestro in the suffering of the characters of his own creation. Into *La Bohème* he poured his heart, and amongst the reasons why it continues to be one of his most popular operas is the memory which it must reawaken in the minds of many listeners, of a little Mimi, passionate and gentle, like the fragrant flower so delicately portrayed by his music.

Tosca, with its broad melodic lines, preceded Butterfly, that tragic figure which brought so much emotion to the world of music. In *Madame Butterfly*, Puccini expressed himself in more refined harmonies, and his orchestrations introduced a new blending of musical colours. I had the good fortune to read the score of this opera before its first performance, whilst waiting one day in the studio of my colleague, Gustavo Macchi, who was at that time one of the most eminent critics of music in Italy. On the piano lay the score of *Madame Butterfly*, which had been given to him some days before its *première*, and, my curiosity aroused, I opened the pages and played passages here and there until fascinated when I reached the aria, *One Fine Day*, I burst into song, singing the beautiful lyrical melody in full voice. I was so absorbed that I did not notice that someone had entered the room, until I felt a gentle tap on my shoulder at the end of the aria, and turned to face Marinetti, the famous littérateur who was the founder of Italian

Futurism, which later gave birth to Cubism and literary impressionism, amongst other forms of art. Impressed by the great beauty of the song, Marinetti exclaimed: "This melody has wings that will bear it through the world, bringing joy to all who were born to appreciate that which is beautiful." Such, indeed, was its destiny.

Widely known is the sad story of the *première* of *Madame Butterfly*, in *La Scala*, Milan, on February 17th, 1904. The public, uneducated to the new form of music in the opera, received it unfavourably, and little pains to defend it were taken by the critics, whose extreme displeasure Puccini had incurred because of his aloofness and complete independence of character. Unlike many aspirants to fame, he was unwilling to seek success through favour from any man, although the injustice of harsh and adverse criticism was a great source of sorrow to him. In addition, there were pitted against him most of the mediocre musicians in Milan, seeking to disturb him by accusations of superficiality and easy triumph. Enraged by his success, they made vain but none-the-less herculean efforts to snatch him from the stars, endeavouring to discredit the purity of his artistic motives. They gave no thought to the misery and sorrow which Puccini had endured in such measure during his struggle for that glory of which he was so modest. He was never satisfied with his work, always seeking a sublime expression that he feared

was for him unattainable. Such was the nobility of his conception of art; such, also, the devout respect for the muse which warmed his heart.

This was the atmosphere of antagonism towards Puccini which prevailed at the time when *Madame Butterfly* was about to be produced. He was well aware of its significance, as were we, the students of the *Conservatorio*, his enthusiastic admirers, who went in a body to *La Scala* on the night of the *première*, to demonstrate against the anticipated hostility. Toscanini was the conductor, and Rosina Storchio played the tragic part of the little Japanese. Not alone did the opera fail, but throughout most of the performance there was a most terrifying uproar in the theatre. Intelligent elements applauded with conviction, but were unable to reverse the unjust condemnation of a stupid audience, and a sense of shame is still felt by the music-loving Milanese that such a ghastly mistake should have been made that night. In his despair, Puccini wept like a child behind the scenes. He withdrew the opera, and many years elapsed before he permitted its reproduction in *La Scala*.

At the time of its *première*, *Madame Butterfly* was divided into two acts, instead of the three which it now comprises, and the second act did not close with the humming chorus of the mariners, as nowadays. With some additions and alterations, it scored a brilliant success when it was performed in Brescia, a few months after its stormy rejection in

Milan. Such has often been the lot of a masterpiece of art, which, stifled on its first appearance, rises subsequently to the heights of fame.

At this point, Puccini entered a new period in which he acquired a more refined power of expression, and his tendency towards modern harmonisations became more apparent than ever. Yet, like his preceding operas, the new works which followed abounded in melodies that were full of sentiment, providing further evidence of his deeply rooted conviction regarding operatic music. To this period belong the impetuous *Girl of the Golden West*, the inspired *Rondine*, the unhappy *Suor Angelica*, the tragic *Tabarro*, the crafty *Gianni Schicchi*, and, at the close of his career, the mysterious *Turandot*, the completion of which was interrupted by the death of the great Maestro; it was later finished by Franco Alfano, who worked on the fragments left by Puccini.

Puccini conveyed his thoughts on the theatre in some of his letters, as when he wrote: "I have a tendency to write only when I feel that my characters are living in the stage of my imagination." Or again: "music without melody does not exist."

In an interesting letter to Ricordi, Verdi wrote: "I have seen a letter which praises Puccini very highly. Although he follows modern tendencies, which is quite natural, he remains faithful to the melody, which is neither ancient nor modern. It

seems, however, that the symphonic element is predominant in him; there is no harm in this, except that one must be cautious in this respect—opera is opera and the symphony is symphony.” By this, Verdi meant that, with talent, there is no limit to the development of one’s sense of the theatre, although such development is subject to laws which demand absolute respect. Indeed, these were the principles to which Puccini adhered, although he found new ways in which to express himself.

Although Puccini outwardly appeared to be a merry character, in reality he was exceedingly quiet, preferring the company of his friends to mingling with the crowds. I often walked with him and some others through the *Galleria*, in Milan. On such occasions he usually wore a heavy coat with collar upturned towards his soft hat with the brim sloped acutely over his left eye. He would laugh like a child at every joke, and find amusement in such activities as inserting pennies in automatic slot machines, in exchange for chocolate, matches, and, as often as not, nothing at all. Puccini’s face, rectangular in shape, invariably wore a faint smile which sometimes dissolved in the shadows of that wistful poetic melancholy which, in some measure, always pursued his restless spirit. His eyes were deeply set beneath uneven brows, and two impertinent moustaches, perched above his small mouth, seemed to accentuate the attraction of the strong white teeth that were always shown by his gay and

heartly laugh, which sometimes would stop so suddenly, ending levity as though fearing the price he might have to pay for such moments of happiness. Actually, Puccini was profoundly sad; sad like so many truly great artists who are prone to emotions and discouragements when their ethereal visions seem incapable of being adequately realised and expressed by their art. He was ever a simple soul, and neither before nor after he had attained fame was there in him the smallest trace of that self assurance so common to men of genius. Neither his mode of dress, although always neat and of good taste nor his mild manner of speaking, would suggest that he was one of the world's foremost men, whose music had re-echoed round the earth, awakening emotions in the heart of every lover of the muse. It was difficult to realise that it was from this seemingly bourgeois person had sprung all the passion and sentiment with which the characters in his operas are imbued.

Puccini derived great pleasure from living in solitude at Torre del Lago whilst composing, or shooting in the neighbourhood when the strain of over-work drove him from his beloved piano. Although his studio was simple, it had at the same time an air of elegance that charmed the eye. On the wall hung portraits of his forebears, all of them musicians of note who seemed to watch over his musical mission and smile their approval when happy melodies came forth from the piano that

seemed to long for the touch of his pensive hands. Puccini always composed at the piano, filling the studio with the delicate fragrance of newly-born melody. He used to say that he was primarily a man of the theatre, and, as such, did not feel to compose until the characters of his works, taking shape in his mind, lived and acted before him, their gesticulations and expressions inspiring him to compose the melodies with which he gave them life. "I cannot write on fixed dates," he declared, "and when I do not feel this feverish inspiration, I prefer to go hunting or to smoke my cigarettes, dreaming in the midst of the smoke rings." And when that fever dictated those divine melodies, it was almost like a cataract of notes falling upon the music sheets, the Maestro working at furious speed, as though in fear that those moving inspirations might dissolve and disappear completely. Notes piled upon notes on his music sheets, while the addition of marginal markings and musical expressions of meticulous precision, made the whole as difficult to decipher as logarithms. Yet, to the smallest detail, everything was in perfect order when Puccini finished with it.

It was in London that I last encountered the Maestro, about two years before his death. He was sad, for the failure of *Suor Angelica* still hung heavily upon him, and any adversity in the sphere of his art caused him sorrow that was magnified out of all proportion to reality. He was pleased

when I told him that the Dublin Operatic Society, which was founded by me, and of which I was musical director at that time, was about to produce some of his operas. In due course, I presented *La Bohème*, *Tosca* and *Gianni Schicchi*.

Puccini's greatest sadness was the fact that he was growing old, and towards the close of his life he was always hastening to complete his musical mission. The sorrow which he experienced because of advancing years was marked in his lined face and reflected in those pools that were his profound eyes. To grow old was the tragedy of this passionate being who was himself the very embodiment of eternal youth.

Let your soul be at ease now, Giacomo, for eternal youth is yours, because of those undying melodies that will ever continue to fill the world with emotion, as long as there are eyes to weep tears, which, like the dew sparkling on a June morn, will keep evergreen the laurel leaves adorning your imperishable memory.

Dublin, 1945.